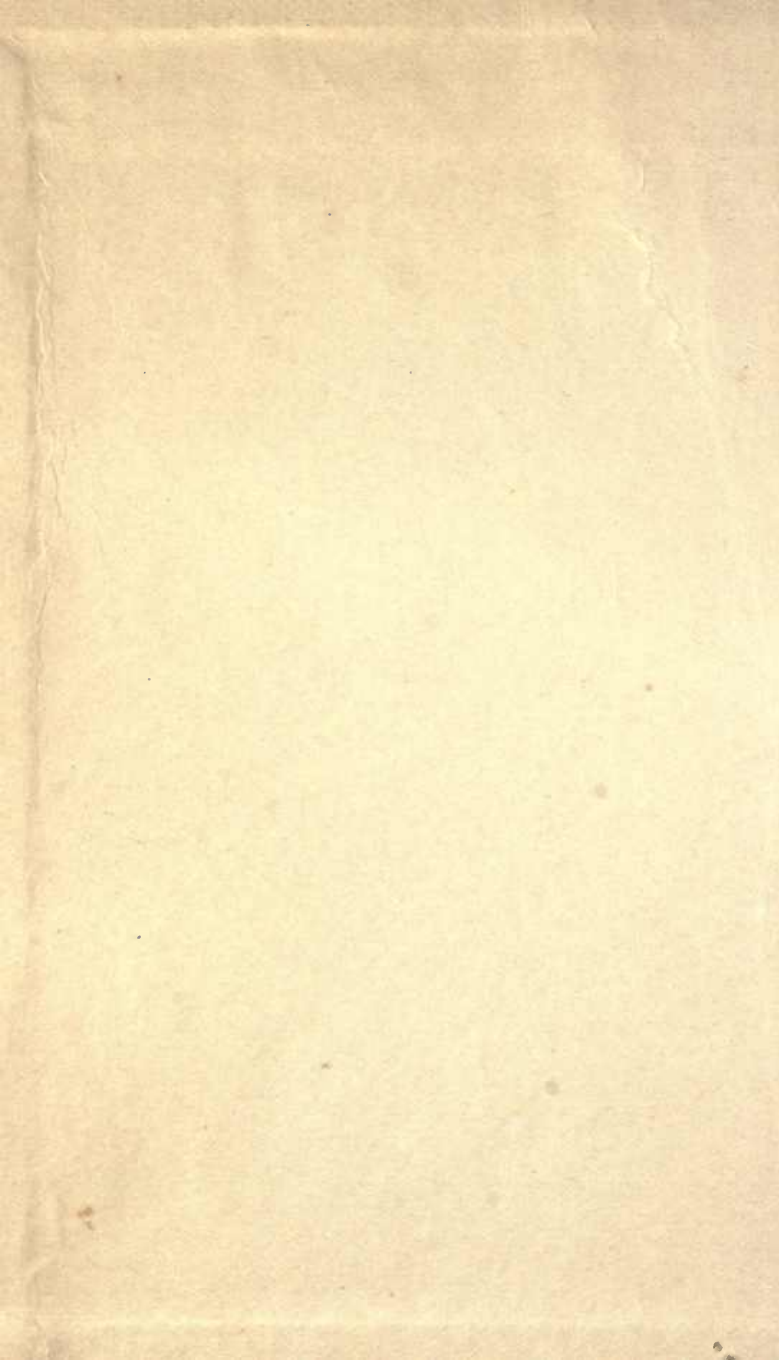


Lakewood

A Story of To-Day









"IT WAS SUCH A LITTLE BIT OF A SHORT WALK."—Page 36.

Lakewood

A Story of To-Day

BY

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LAKEWOOD.

CHAPTER I.

A HUGE log fire was burning on the hearth of the Lakewood station. A short, thick-set man of cheerful aspect occupied a settee near the fire. His gaze was fixed on a window looking up the track. The 3.45 train from New York was late.

A motley array of vehicles made a semicircle around the station, which could have been mistaken for a stone church or a lodge, were it not for the wide platforms and the straight tracks running north and south.

A foreign-looking woman in voluminous fur wraps strode up and down the front platform. Young men with canes and in fur caps were also outside in considerable force. Every one and every thing wore the delightful coming and going air marking a fashionable resort.

Suddenly the train, much foreshortened, glided into view.

The foreigner tucked a red silk handkerchief

around her neck. The young men turned up their astrakhan or seal collars and tried to look as cold as possible. The carriages fell into closer line. The man on the settee, with an added light in his clear, full blue eyes, went outside.

A swarm of passengers crowded from the train. They were an astonishingly large "first-class" company. Some hurried to the enormous stages, others to the carriages; a handful started at a brisk pace down the board sidewalks radiating towards the town. The foreign woman, with athletic vehemence, joyfully shook hands with a man who carried a huge bass-viol in a green covered case.

The countenance of the man who had sat so long on the settee beamed with delight as the last passenger in the rear car appeared at the door and cast a serene, curious gaze upon her surroundings. Her gaze expanded a trifle as she discovered her escort. She smiled affably as she gave him her hand while alighting. A porter and a conductor, each grasping an arm at the same time, considerably expedited her descent.

She shook herself out a little later, when released, and said,

"This is a surprise. I did not expect to see you down here."

"Glad to see me, though, I hope?" he asked in a neutral, cheerful tone.

"O, yes indeed—very. Dear, dear, what a sharp wind!" as they turned the corner of the station. "I thought Lakewood was the land of balmy air and sunshine."

"So it is! so it is! It is always bleak around this station though. But wait till we go for a drive in the pines."

His voice had taken on a slight boyish eagerness.

She glanced at him good-humoredly, perhaps with something fleetingly motherly in her aspect as he mentioned the drive.

"Aren't the pines a myth, after all?" she queried, stepping into the brougham.

"A myth! I could take you nine miles in a bee-line to the sea through the pines and not strike a single opening." Apparently he grew more and more exhilarated as he talked.

She was a very elegant woman, and as she sank back into her corner of the carriage, her fair, serene face with those mild, yet watchful blue eyes turned toward him, a flush of further animation overspread his kind, frank face. Although four or five years her senior, his manner was so confiding and happy, that he seemed more youthful than she did.

"Is Ethel as well as usual?" she asked, after a minute's silence.

"Yes, about!" A shade of seriousness deepened

his voice. "The fact is, I am down here on Ethel's account. Usually I feel like letting lovers have their way, yet when I think of what a pair of simpletons Theodore and Ethel were to marry——"

"This from you who are always so positively optimistic !"

He laughed good-naturedly and apologetically.

"You see if I weren't a doctor, I wouldn't understand the trend of things so well. For two such children to marry is no laughing matter."

"Very true," she said contemplatively, but there was a wistful far-away look in her lovely eyes. "They are great lovers, you know."

"That's so ! Well, you will see for yourself in five minutes.—There's the 'Laurel House.' It can't shake a stick at the 'Lakewood' for style, but it is an awfully cosy place to stop at. Right in town too. Nice place for men on that account."

"I want to get away from town."

"You can't do it at Lakewood. You will soon find that out. Society is here in solid phalanxes. You will meet about everybody you know."

"Not at Ethel's cottage, surely."

"Precisely the place." Dr. Brighteck grasped

his knees conclusively. "She is simply run over with company. Avalanches fall upon her from the 'Laurel-in-the-Pines.' Whole fleets sail through her hospitable doors from the 'Lakewood.' As for the cottagers—well, there is no end to the dinners, charity entertainments, musicals, lectures, lunches, drives—oh, you'll find Ethel in full swing."

"You surprise me," and Mrs. Candace looked still more grave. "She wrote she was afraid I would find the life here rather monotonous."

Dr. Brighteck sat back and laughed.

"Exactly like Ethel. She has no sense of proportion, nor Theodore either. They are two of the happiest-go-lucky fools I ever knew—and yet, when I am once under their roof, if I don't bask in their sunshine like everybody else!"

They turned off Madison Avenue into the broad drive to the chateau-like "Laurel-in-the-Pines."

On their left was the lake, its surface a steely-blue under a mottled sky. On their right was a cluster of cottages with large spaces between.

The yellow soil, the patches of sun lying like whipped cream lightly on the sandy loams and lawns, the high crooning whistle of the wind, and a park-like appearance everywhere, pleased Mrs. Candace. She leaned forward with quite a show

of interest when her companion pointed to an ample colonial mansion sheltered at the north by a grove of sombre pines.

"It is all unusual and pretty. Five years abroad gives one opportunity, after all, for surprises at home. I had no idea things were so finished or extensive. It is as tame but as cheerful as Parisian suburbs. I am afraid I am growing hopelessly fond of everything highly civilized."

"Civilization won't spoil you. Very few are like you, though," and he regarded her approvingly. "Civilization is your birthright; it is your native air; but for most of us Americans it is still a veneer—— ah, too rare I mean. I'd like to give a whoop this minute."

"You may."

"I haven't time, for here we are. Look at Ethel's windows—fluffy and airy, and frail as she—but mighty pretty. And the inside of the coop—whew."

She glanced over the spacious front of "Pine Burrs." Her feminine love of elegant drapery was gratified. Every window shone with plate-glass splendor, and each was hung with fine lace or mull curtains, behind or through which glimmered silk draperies of all sorts of rich colors and textures. The side lights of the broad, many panelled front door were filled with pale green silk, and the

great windows giving on the dazzling white piazza were softened with sash-hangings of the same delicate shade.

As Elizabeth Candace, her skirts caught gracefully in either hand, ascended the steps, the door was swung open by a butler in knee-breeches and scarlet vest. Just behind him, near a fire, and with the quartered oak of the immense hall for a background, stood young Mrs. Grace, shielding the open neck of her gown with a slender white hand, for a sharp gust of wind swept in.

“Quick, Buxton, shut the door.”

As the door swung closed, she sprang toward her friend, both hands extended, and the sweetest possible welcome illuminating each delicate feature. She kissed Mrs. Candace excitedly and enthusiastically—standing off one moment to look at her guest, and the next clasping Mrs. Candace in both arms.

“You—are—the dearest creature”—another kiss—“to come! You’ll find everything very simple—primitive—but we are really most comfortable.”

“You know my tastes were always primitive, Ethel, and though I perceive Lakewood is an exceedingly plain resort—still;” and she broke into a laugh.

“Well, after Paris, you know?”

“I never yet have seen suburban simplicity like

this near Paris. However, I am used to roughing it."

"Don't you think it is pretty?" now asked Ethel simply.

"I do, as much as I have seen of it."

"Come right upstairs. I have given you the very prettiest room in the house, not the most elegant, but the prettiest."

"I am glad you had regard to my simple tastes."

"Now, Mrs. Candace! I am more in awe of your taste than of any one's in the world. You know I am."

They walked arm-in-arm up the wide staircase, broken by landings, Ethel casting a glance of girlish delight around as they came out on a second hall, a fac-simile of the one below, except that it was painted in white and hung all over with water-colors, while its ample windows were draped in rose-pink.

"We call this hall 'Spring.' Isn't it gay and sunny?"

"Beautiful!" Mrs. Candace looked around with critical approval.

"And this is your room." Ethel turned the door-knob eagerly.

"It is charming, dear. Thank you."

"Now I will leave you alone for an hour. And oh, after dinner a few friends are coming in, rather

informally, to hear Miss Max lecture on 'Roman Antiquities.' "

"Miss Max ! not Portia Max ? "

"Yes, Portia Max. Would you have believed it ! She will do herself credit too. We may dance awhile after the lecture. Look your loveliest, please ;" and Ethel, nodding gaily, withdrew.

CHAPTER II.

THE white-and-gold drawing-room was arranged for the lecture, which was to begin at half-past eight.

The electric lights around the ceiling shone in subdued brilliancy through clusters of crystal roses. There were flowers everywhere. Chairs of various shapes and sizes were set in semi-circles, and a little separated from them was a high-backed Florentine seat beside an onyx table whose sole ornament was a basket of lilies.

"There! I should think Portia would find it easy to talk here," and Ethel looked around judiciously. "I feel awfully anxious about her. To-night means so much. How long since you saw Portia, Mrs. Candace?"

"Let me think. Why, it must be seven years. I did not realize it was so long. While I was dressing for dinner I kept thinking of her—as she looked the summer she was engaged to Donald Blair."

"Poor Portia!"

"I remember, too, an odd circumstance that summer in connection with her. A gypsy was

telling our various fortunes, and when it came to Portia's turn he absolutely refused to say a word."

"Yes, I know ; Mrs. Clay was there too and she was telling me only the other day it must have been because Portia was to have such tremendous sorrows and misfortunes. She is the bravest little thing."

"I never knew she had talent of this sort."

"She hasn't a particle of talent—only sheer, downright pluck. She must do something, and as everybody who becomes reduced nowadays tries readings or recitations or lectures, why, Portia's friends got together and agreed to make up a course for her. There are to be six !"

Ethel clasped her hands tragically and looked with a woebegone expression at her friend. "We are bound to support her though, even if she should prove as dry as her subject—and then, she will do it cheaper than some one well known. It allows us to have our customary winter class and at the same time we shall be accomplishing a real kindness. After each lecture we are to have a little dance and supper. Portia has been invited to stay for them as well. It is really a nice thing for her."

"How much do you give her a lecture ?"

"Ten dollars. Very good ; don't you think so ?"

"It depends. I suppose she has to have a

special dress and carriage. It would never do to appear in the evening in walking boots in this parlor."

"O, Mrs. Clay is going to send a carriage for her. As to a special dress, Portia is so literally without one fine gown that these occasions are mercies. She simply has to have one. I am anticipating seeing her look fashionable once more."

"But can't you realize, dear, it will take all the money from the lectures to buy the dress. Then there are the hard work and excitement."

"It won't take all the money in her case. She will make it herself. She will get that dress for forty dollars and then clear twenty. Besides, it is an opening. If she succeeds at all, Mrs. Darlington is going to arrange for a public lecture at the 'Lakewood.' I think her prospects very bright—considering."

Mrs. Candace looked down gravely at Ethel, fragile as a tea-rose and as exquisite as one in a nest of green leaves, for she was christening the latest novelty Doucet had sent over—a pale green crêpe empire gown relieved around the bodice with pearls, while rows of the same waxy beads trimmed the bouffant sleeves. Pearls of fabulous price glistened in her shell-like ears. Her slender fingers were burdened with gems.

Elizabeth withdrew into herself. For this

young woman laden with wealth had spoken of cheapness as a desideratum concerning the lectures. Dr. Brighteck was right. The disregard of money where higher refinements were concerned was still unknown as an American virtue. The social atmosphere was still murky with hastily won, hardly kept and greedily enjoyed material luxury.

"I have given Portia the onyx table. She is so fond of beautiful things. It doesn't represent what it once did, for the duty is taken off onyx, and you can buy tables almost as good as mine at Sterns' or Macy's, only the brass of these cheaper styles is of course not hammered; but they look about as well. I keep my fondness for the table, though, because we picked it up on our wedding trip.—And I bought that basket of lilies with my own money. I am going to let Portia take them home with her. She will be so surprised. Dear me, do you remember her grandfather's conservatories? I often wonder if she ever thinks of them. She never speaks, though, of the past."

"What has she been doing since—since she was thrown on her own resources?"

"Almost everything. Read to invalids, been a companion, tried to teach small children in a deaf-mute school. It has been dreadful." Ethel shut her eyes and gave a faint shiver.

"How does it happen the men are to be present. I thought men never appeared at parlor lectures given by women. Is it a new fashion sprung up since I went away?"

"No, it is Portia's own idea. You see the men who will be here know all about her—most of them used to know her intimately. She said if she did it at all, she preferred a mixed audience—that it seemed more impersonal. Besides, it will be a preparation for the public lecture."

Mrs. Candace smiled gently. She respected the delicate effort on Portia's part to obtain an unbiased verdict as well as to take a position before the public untrammelled by sex. She found her old interest in a former school-friend greatly reviving.

"It is time they were coming. Half-past eight is rather early as so many of our friends dine late. But the committee decided it was the best hour for Portia. Ah, here is some one."

Mrs. Candace, at Ethel's request, assisted in receiving the guests.

There were numerous exclamations of surprise as one after another met the long absent traveler who was welcomed with the peculiar *empressement* given only to a woman of the highest social position or one endowed with vast personal resources.

Any discriminating observer would surmise

that Elizabeth Candace was blest in both of these respects.

At length every one had come. All were seated. There was an occasional subdued rustle of silk, there was the scented air from waving fans. There were numerous costumes from Worth, Doucet and famous city modistes. The men were out in force, a few looking blandly amused, others indifferent; on the face of a half dozen was a mild curiosity to see Portia Max in this new phase of her panoramic life. One man, far above the average height, with sharply-cut features, a short chin beard, and gold-rimmed eye-glasses making more prominent an unworldly pair of blue-gray eyes stood at one corner of the mantel facing the doors. He wanted to see Miss Max enter.

Upstairs in Ethel's sitting-room, waiting the summons to descend, sat the lecturer. Her small feet, in black slippers and silk stockings, were rigidly crossed. The folds of her black and red silk muslin dress fell around her without a break. Her little thin fingers were absently picking at the upholstery of her chair. A high, faintly-smiling somewhat strained expression emphasized each feature.

She was trying to recall the heads of her carefully-written talk. But instead, the Astor library, with its rows on rows of books, the noiseless libra-

rians passing hither and thither with huge folios, her own vast pile of works of reference, her tired back and crammed memory kept coming to the surface as prime facts.

“Seven Hills of Rome—myths—historical poets connected with them.”

“Forum—Temple of Peace—Vestal Virgins—old pavement—anecdotes about cats haunting the Forum ruins.”

“Appian Way—history of gate giving on Appian Way;—Monument of Cecelia Metella—Ashes of the Pisans—as anecdotes.”

“Coliseum—Allusion to Daisy Miller and The Lady or the Tiger.”

“Catacombs—oh, how I wish I were lying in them, a heap of dust, this minute!” Portia brushed a tear away.

Then her sensitive mouth became tense, and resolutely fixing on the wall a blank gaze behind which was a blanker mind, she waited.

Presently the door opened, and the liveried butler said impressively:

“Mrs. Grace sent me for you, Miss.”

She grasped her MS. A little, curdling shiver meandered down her back. Her heart gave a quivering throb as she reached the final landing of the staircase. A few steps below was Ethel, radiant, encouraging, and with a tenderly affectionate look and manner. She seized Portia's

hand, whispering—"Don't be afraid. You know we all love you."

She gave a little return squeeze and then walked behind Ethel who gracefully rearranged the Florentine seat, set the basket of lilies a little forward and examined the tall lamp in a crimson-colored shade just back of the onyx table. Mrs. Grace enjoyed being a hostess. And now, as her part was finished, she gave Portia a summarizing, encouraging smile and glided to her chair.

The tall man with the eye-glasses also took a seat, but continued steadfastly, wonderingly, staring at Miss Max. He was an amateur entomologist.

Here and there a wife nestled a little closer to her husband.

Some of the men became retrospective. Many simply wondered if she would get through.

A tall brunette with a sweet mouth and a fine dignity felt her feet suddenly grow cold out of nervous sympathy. She noticed Elizabeth Candace's expression of intense solicitude. Mrs. Candace sat in the front row, Portia suddenly glanced towards her, recognized her as quickly, even after the lapse of years, and also recognized a woman with the loyal spirit of a Crusader. She did not take the loyalty to herself, but she did to womankind in general. She all at once glowed with a purpose to please Mrs. Candace.

The entomologist noted the flash of sympathy between the two women, as well as the spontaneousness of the brunette. He marvelled at the quick intuition and silent electric exchange of sympathy and fortitude possible to women.

"It is the dominant sex for all higher purposes," he said to himself.

And then the lecturer began. She talked correctly and relevantly, marshalled her facts and her anecdotes respectably, had her beginning, middle and end duly blocked off, and let her hearers know in time to save them from ennui exactly how much ground she had gone over and how much was left. She had memorized her lecture so thoroughly that she found she could talk without her manuscript. This increased her freedom of speech and simplicity of manner. She was never brilliant, but she was clear, explicit, and, what was more to the purpose with such a gathering, she was pleasant to look at, and her voice had a genuine melody and womanly sweetness entirely devoid of stage effect.

Her friends felt immensely relieved that she had succeeded so well. Those who were present merely because Mrs. Grace had invited them were willing to be introduced, and the men said she was a clever little thing and that it was an awful pity some fellow hadn't picked her up long ago and married her.



“AND THEN THE LECTURE BEGAN.”—Page 18.

Portia's chief thought when she had finished was that she wished she need never do it again—and that there were five more talks in the course! But she hadn't time to think long, because the tall brunette came forward, took her hand and said "Thank you." Another lady with a cold eye and a prejudiced mouth asked ingenuously, "Who writes your lectures for you, Miss Max?" And still another pushed forward and said in a high treble, "Shall I pay you in a check or in money? Must I take the whole course, or can I come when I wish and pay for separate lectures?"

Ethel broke in promptly with "Mrs. Darlington is the secretary."

Mrs. Candace stood a little behind Portia, and when there was a lull she took the small, moist, tremulous hands, saying, "I am glad I came back in time to hear your first lecture. May I call on you soon?"

Portia said yes, slightly averting her face to conceal the tears.

The entomologist now asked for an introduction, and after it was given said sincerely and abruptly, "It was much better than I expected. I am coming to every one." As he turned away, something in the small crimson dots of Miss Max's dress made him think of the last beetle he had transfixed, and he suspected she had

suffered more agony through apprehension than any specimen in his collection had done in fact.

The dance now began. The supper that followed brought the evening to a gay, if fatiguing, conclusion.

Ethel looked white, and coughed when Mrs. Candace and she went upstairs for the night, but she insisted it was only because of the slight dust in the air. Touching her friend's arm, she said indignantly,

"Did you hear what Mrs. Green said to Portia the very last thing?"

"What did she say?"

"When Portia remarked that she wondered why her carriage was so late, Mrs. Green asked her if she didn't mean her cab, and poor Portia, too tired to think, smiled and said 'Yes.'"

"It was the very best answer she could give."

"I suppose so, but I fairly hated Mrs. Green."

CHAPTER III.

THE entomologist had spent the entire winter at the "Laurel-in-the-Pines." He had not taken the usual "bachelor's room"; instead, he had a suite of three rooms. He was altogether one of the most conspicuous and luxurious guests at Lakewood.

The morning after Portia's lecture, he felt in an aimless frame of mind—not an unusual condition with him. He had been standing several minutes in a brown study in the smallest of his three rooms before a pine case filling an entire side from floor to ceiling and containing a great variety of insects labelled and mounted.

After scanning the whole collection he sat down, as if with a final effort to be interested, to examine microscopically an infinitesimal organism on a moss fern. He watched its mouth open and shut, noted the various contortions of its antennæ, studied the red spots on its vivid black surface, and suddenly looked away absent-mindedly. That small creature, invisible to the naked eye, but clothed in a garment of black with red spots, made him think of Miss Max. He

had been thinking of her more or less for the last twelve hours and he was tired of it. Here she was again personated by an animalculum.

Pushing his microscope aside, he went into his parlor. The windows faced the front. He gazed with a faint superciliousness on the scene below.

The wind and moisture of the night before had melted the snow. The squares of lawn in front of the hotel gave a hint of returning spring. Here and there was a patch of green. The wide avenue was already gay with a party of equestrians, and several vehicles—a dog-cart, a T-cart with horses tandem, and a long three-seated open carriage, quite blocked the space between the two projecting side wings. Across the avenue soared the pines, and through these he could see the lake, very blue and smooth this March morning.

Just outside the main entrance sat a Hindoo cross-legged, holding up with oriental humility to all who passed, embroideries, bits of tapestry, and table-covers. It seemed to the entomologist at this moment that in the way of a vocation the Hindoo had him at an advantage.

He did not exactly wish he were poor, and there was no use in his wishing this.

He was, as he expressed himself occasionally, the victim of a succession of entailed fortunes. Whenever in a fit of recklessness or with the

spirit of a spendthrift he had sunk all at once a year's income, some relative had been sure to die and inflict him with an additional twenty thousand a year.

Becoming tired of this experience, he had learned to do what most rich men do. He supplied his real and imaginary wants at market values, and was properly careful to pay neither too much nor too little for what he got. He prudently invested the yearly surplus from his income. He grew steadily richer. He now simply endured his wealth with stolid indifference, and if he thought of it at all, wondered that it gave him such small satisfactions.

He was young still—thirty, and had such an ingenuous, unworldly look, bearing himself and his riches in such a thoroughly unconceited way, that all the girls liked him and their mothers adored him. But, although he had an unsuspecting openness of manner, a way of his own of dressing that was hardly marked enough to be peculiar, but seemed to stamp him as unobserving and indiscriminating, he was nevertheless very observing, very tenacious of facts and family histories, and could without an effort have given an inventory of the guests at the "Laurel-in-the-Pines" that would have astonished the proprietors. His general grasp of society details was exactly that of the man of leisure.

He came by his knowledge naturally and creditably enough. Everybody trusted what was called his unworldliness. People gossiped to him with a feeling of perfect safety, for he listened, asked an occasional question, but gave no personal information in return. He was called such a good young man. He was truly clever. He possessed a stock of latent force, but, as an American, was unfortunate in feeling no spur for its development. "A man of leisure" is still a misnomer in this democratic land; the few who study or rather work desperately to be men of leisure—"society men," as they are sometimes inappropriately termed—are miserable failures in a country where a man has to be first and last a wage-earner.

But Bryan Mallory slipped between the planes of flattery and censure because he was unegotistical. It really requires almost superhuman impudence to talk to an unegotistical person about himself, and as he is usually willing to humor this weakness in another, he is defined as sympathetic or appreciative.

He sincerely wished he knew why he was unable to care vividly about people. He longed for sensations. His bugs and beetles, his larvæ and worms, were the resort of desperation. In studying them, he was in a world quite his own, for he was perfectly sure that the subject was

one nobody cared to discuss with him. He had long ago found out that if he wanted to get rid of a guest he had simply to mention entomology or adjust his microscope.

His collection kept increasing, and at the rate it was proceeding, he was afraid it would enlarge into a museum. He had therefore begun to study the history and equipment of institutions, in order to discover which one would be kind enough to receive his specimens.

On this particular morning he wondered what subject he should take up after entomology.

Although his knowledge in the specialties he had pursued was not extensive, yet the yearly accretions gave him a convenient and varied intelligence which sometimes cropped out in a rather surprising way in casual conversation.

There were a half dozen cottages where he visited familiarly. He had numerous acquaintances coming and going at the hotels. He went often to the "Lakewood" to see a family of Jews whom he liked on the whole better than anyone he had met in a year. The latch-string was always open to him at Mrs. Darlington's. She occupied an isolated cottage, flanked front and rear by pines, a small natural clearing all around it which was oftener than not utilized and enjoyed by a colony of chickens and a huge St. Bernard. Bryan liked Mrs. Darlington, he

lazily admired Mrs. Candace ; Ethel slightly amused him. She had a touch of the New England vulgarity, euphemistically styled shrewdness, but which in Europe would be called Hebraism, and he studied her somewhat as he would a beetle. He had not quite classified her. But Portia !

For twelve hours he had thought of Portia,—and, although he was really honest in wishing to be interested in some one or something, he was surprised and vexed because his indolent habit of mind had been invaded abruptly.

In philosophizing on an ardent interest, if one ever did come, he had fancied himself walking up to it, examining it, holding out a flag of truce, if he thought best, while dictating all the terms. But here he was overtaken, told to surrender arms, and given no terms of capitulation. It was an exceedingly odd situation for him, and, reasonable or not according to his theories, he meant to show fight. Women were admirable. He had always said so, and he meant what he said. But a woman, an individual one, a world epitomized, a sun to which he was a revolving moon !

He went back to his microscope. He put a second moss fern under it. Doubtless another minute creature would appear—different—no, there was a duplicate little being, spotted red on a black ground.

He laughed aloud.

He would go and call on Mrs. Darlington.

He struck into a path back of the hotel, leading by a short cut to the slight rise of ground on which stood the Darlington cottage. Very few went this way, and he anticipated a solitary walk.

There was a warm, steady wind blowing. It rocked the tops of the pines. The fallen needles, saturated with moisture and packed by winter frosts, made a soft carpet, while here and there the yellow sand cropping out golden in the brilliant sunshine gave a weird and premature cheerfulness to the monotonous landscape. There was a barely perceptible piney fragrance in sunny spots. An occasional wintergreen cluster with its low-lying berries suggested returning spring.

It was a bright, gentle day with the half sad, half joyful presence of the spring in its hours.

Bryan speedily recovered his good-humor, even losing resistance to Portia's persistent image. He had gone half a mile, idly switching the underbrush with his cane or stopping to listen to the mercenary arguments of the sparrows—when, suddenly, sitting on a log and facing an amphitheatrical opening in the woods, he saw Miss Max.

The spot was sheltered. The sunshine fell athwart her figure, and, early in the season though it was, she looked snug and warm. A book lay

in her lap, open and face downwards, but her eyes were slightly lifted, and a pleased, dreamy expression showing in her pose and features made her appear companioned by sweet thoughts.

The black dress with the red spots vanished, to be replaced by a brown one, closely fitting, above which appeared a pair of shoulders encased in a very much worn fur cape and surmounting this a face shaded by a broad-brimmed hat.

She was sincerely glad to see him. She remembered how kind he looked the night before—and then she knew all the good things everybody said of him. She did not think he would stop, but she held herself ready to bow when he drew near enough. This she did.

Instead of going straight on to the Darlington cottage, as he had intended when he first saw her, he paused to make a few remarks while dallying with his cane. He asked if he would disturb her by sharing her log a few minutes.

“Not in the least,” and she moved a little, as if to make more room.

“I come here nearly every day,” she said ingeniously. “Nobody else seems to have found out the spot, and I like it. It is so hard to get away from crowds in Lakewood.”

“I am afraid I am too gregarious to be oppressed in that way. Still, one has a choice.”

“Yes, but oftener than not we all choose those

we can't enjoy. I mean they are appropriated by others."

"I dare say the appropriation makes half the value. Don't you think so?"

She shook her head decidedly, declaring that she knew every time exactly what she liked in people.

"Don't you ever dread the trouble of a new friendship—even of an acquaintance?"

"The trouble!" She looked at him in amazement. "No, no indeed. That kind of trouble is a luxury. No, I can never like too many, but I have preferences, of course. This is disagreeable for others sometimes, for a sensitive person feels keenly when he is disliked."

"It would be better for you not to try to be in such a positive state of mind towards particular individuals. It isn't worth your while."

"I do not try. I am."

He looked at her with curiosity. If Lakewood were deserted the next hour by its nomadic population, he knew he would not feel a pang. If it became plethoric with charming people, he would only be lazily interested.

"Do you mean to say," he inquired, "that you are all the time meeting people in a place like this for whom you form attachments?"

"Yes, I do, real or imaginary."

"I can't understand it. I like to see people,

to watch them, to know their histories, just as I like to read books. But I would never take the trouble to collect a library."

"O, wouldn't you!" said Portia in dismay. "Why, if I could, I would own every single book I ever read. They are so human."

"People are so bookish to me. I read them through, and there is an end of them. I should think though it might be very nice to feel these numerous warm interests in humanity." He looked kindly at her.

She did not know whether he were making fun of her or not. She did not really care, but she thought if she were better acquainted with him she might have a positive liking for him.

"Well," she said, as if it were the conclusion, "I hope you and I shall at least keep on speaking terms. Don't try to ever read more than my preface."

"I hope you are a book in many volumes."

"I shall always have the last one missing," she said, gaily.

He rose.

She sat still.

He looked around as if trying to find something else to say. All he did say was "Good-morning," and, tipping his hat, he passed on.

Portia resumed her book.

CHAPTER IV.

"PAPA has decided you must spend the spring at Lakewood, Millicent."

"Yes, mamma?"

"Yes. He made up his mind this morning. I can't go with you. I wish I could, but I have to stay with Papa. I am sure though we can arrange with Miss Beadle to chaperon you."

"She is so tiresome!"

"I never find her tiresome. I think her a very self-effacing, entertaining woman."

"That is just what I don't like. Can't you think of some one else? Somebody who would make an incident of me instead of an exclamation point?"

"You are very ungenerous to Miss Beadle. I don't know her equal for this sort of thing. She is careful and unobtrusive, not too good-looking and not too poor."

"Let it be Miss Beadle, then. What is the occasion of this sudden plan?"

Mrs. Kent looked up with momentary irresolution. It was difficult to assure Millicent in the face of her perfect health that she needed a change. Perhaps it would be best to say it was a

matter of convenience, which was at least half the truth.

"Papa is always sudden² about everything, daughter." She invariably called her husband "Papa" when talking to Millicent.

"He usually has his reasons."

The older lady was embroidering a "centre-piece." She drew several stitches in silence. Finally she looked up.

"Papa may have to go to England at any moment. If he does, he wants me to accompany him. We can shut up the house as soon as Lent begins. Papa and I can go to the 'Buckingham.' You can spend the time till Easter at Lakewood. Then we'll all come together at the hotel again till it is time to open the Tuxedo house. Papa usually plans wisely and kindly for every one concerned, don't you think so?"

"Yes, certainly;—only I wish I were going to England too!" And Millicent threw up her arms and yawned.

"I proposed taking you with us, but Papa said 'No!' And when he says 'No' that is the end of it."

She glanced at Millicent as if she had been pronouncing a eulogy on her husband. She was a small, compact, amiable looking woman with a childlike face, who evidently liked nothing better than leading-strings for life.

Millicent gazed at her mother rather absent-mindedly. She was mentally projecting the next six weeks on the basis of previous experiences. Apparently the daughter possessed Mrs. Kent's amiability and to a certain extent her ready acquiescence. But it was plain also that she was a girl of moods, and with a passionate, romantic temperament. This was evident in the sparkle and expansion of her hazel-gray eyes, in the wave of her abundant glossy hair and in the ebb and flow of a fine color. She had been like a piece of driftwood thus far in her life, and a good many queer barnacles of prejudice as well as of cosmopolitanism clung to her, giving her an originality due to circumstances rather than natural gifts. She spoke a curious but pretty form of her mother tongue. Her accent was English, her vowel sounds Bostonian, and her consonants and final syllables had the finished elegance of the best New York speech. She had a delightful, mellow, sympathetic voice, so that her most trivial commonplaces found listeners.

There was something big, even to heartiness, in her atmosphere, but she gave no impression of coarseness, much less of vulgarity. She dressed well, carried herself with dignity, was slightly educated, though speaking several languages with courier flexibility. She went weekly to the Berkley Lyceum to keep in tone the splendid health and

development she already possessed, attended the symphonies to cultivate her taste, was devoted to Wagner, loved dancing, was a rigid high-church woman, shook hands perpendicularly, thoroughly believed in the classes, knew little and cared nothing about the masses, had read no French novels, not many American ones, and was well versed in English and French History, while totally ignorant of American History. Her first winter in society was drawing to a close and she had found its pleasures neither a delusion nor a snare. She intended to observe Lent rigidly, although she was sorry it came so early. But, since she was on the verge of Lent, Lakewood was on the whole as good a place as any for devotion and fashionable recuperation.

So, greatly to her mother's relief, she did not oppose the plan.

A few days later and the city house was as austere and dark as a vault. The numerous portraits and paintings were covered, the elaborate portières were encased in camphorated bags, the carpets were overlaid with linen druggets, the mattresses were stored together in one room, the silver and costly ornaments were carried to the safety deposit warehouse, the servants were sent to board in the country on half wages and the gas and steam companies given notice, the burglar

alarms all reset, the water turned off from the upper floors, the front entrance barricaded with a wooden door, the railings of the front stoop sheathed, and the letter carriers given the change of address to deposit at the nearest Post Office Station.

When everything was declared finished, Mrs. Kent went to bed at her hotel and stayed two weeks, her doctor pronouncing the malady nervous prostration.

Millicent remained with her a few days and bloomed out brighter and brighter. She led a quiet life. She took breakfast and lunch with her mother in their private parlor. She went to church twice daily—in the morning to “St. Mary the Virgin” and in the afternoon to “St. Thomas.” As “St. Mary’s” was rather far across town, she went there accompanied by her mother’s maid; as “St. Thomas” was very near and on the avenue, she was permitted to attend afternoon service alone.

She was getting much good out of Lent. She made splendid resolutions for the coming year which she intended to keep. She repeated the Litany with great fervor, and no one could have been more sincere or more humble for the time being than Millicent was when she said in her steady, musical voice—“God, have mercy on us, miserable sinners.” No one ejaculated

with more reverential emphasis than she—"And incline our hearts to keep this law."

Thus far she had found being a miserable sinner comfortable and æsthetic; she had never become painfully conscious of penalties either divine or human for laws or duties shirked.

On the last day of February, when she came out of St. Thomas, one of innumerable other women, a soft light in her eyes and a flush on her cheeks, she was feeling thankful that serving God was so spontaneous and easy a task.

Hers was not the only pair of sweet, youthful eyes that included the avenue North and South, and hers was not the only girlish mouth quivering with smiles and recognition at once. At least twenty maidens met accidentally twenty young men happening there from down town by the merest chance just as the service ended.

Perth Edwards tipped his hat with a faint effort at surprise to Millicent, asking if he might walk with her as far as her hotel. She bowed a constrained, delighted consent, and then asked the question she had now put several afternoons in succession:

"How did you happen to get up town so early?"

It was such a little bit of a short walk, although they covered the blocks as deliberately as possible. One afternoon they had stopped at the

Cathedral and sat a long time under the shadow of a cluster of pillars, listening to the music. Perth took Millicent's hand. She looked at him reproachfully but did not withdraw it.

This one week of Lent, with Mrs. Kent shut up in her room, made precisely the prelude to the Lakewood sojourn which "Papa" would have supremely deprecated, had he known it.

On the sixth afternoon of undisturbed delight, Millicent with her escort came face to face with Miss Beadle who was crossing the avenue in front of the "Buckingham." She bowed graciously and presently disappeared in the Fifth Avenue entrance. The young people went to the side one. A shadow heavier than the frowning one of the Cathedral settled upon them.

"It is the end of our good times, I suppose," said Edwards, bitterly.

Millicent drew herself up a little haughtily. She did not enjoy the implication of unconvictionality.

"What do you mean?" she asked, a cool glance in her clear eyes.

"Why, Miss Beadle, of course!"

"It makes no difference to me if Miss Beadle saw us."

He balanced his cane irresolutely.

"O, come now, Millicent!" he expostulated.

They both laughed.

"Good-bye," she said, a minute later, her hand pressed against the storm-door.

"Good-bye. O, by the way, do you know where you are going to stop yet?"

She nodded.—"The Lakewood." Then she disappeared.

"Papa," said Mrs. Kent that night, after Millicent had gone to her own room, "how soon are you going to run down to Lakewood with daughter?"

"O, almost any day. I don't feel in a hurry. She seems well enough off here."

Mrs. Kent looked as if she would like to differ, if he approved.

He knew that something very serious indeed stirred in her mind when her views did not immediately take the coloring of his.

"You want to say something, Mamma. Out with it!"

When Jupiter thus nodded, the vials of Mrs. Kent's eloquence opened.

"It is just here, Papa, dear. Miss Beadle called to-day. She is ready to start at a minute's notice—and she saw Millicent and Perth Edwards walking down the avenue this afternoon."

"What was Millicent doing out alone?"

"She coaxed so to go to afternoon service by herself—and it was so near that I consented."

"I gave you credit for more sence, Mamma.

Girls of Millicent's age are silly. If they weren't they wouldn't be half as interesting, either. Perth Edwards is all well enough, but he needn't make advances to my girl. The Edwards, the whole set, with their fallen fortunes, are an ambitious lot—and so are the Kents!"

"I never heard a word against Perth."

"He's poor!"

Mr. Kent got up and walked the floor.

"To-morrow's Sunday, isn't it. Do you think, as it is an emergency, you could go to church twice to-morrow? Millicent must not suspect we are thwarting her. She isn't made in the same mold as you, Mamma. I wish she were!"

Mrs. Kent looked up fondly. Her weak, affectionate lips worked in a gratified smile over even but prominent teeth.

"No, Millicent is not like me!" and she rocked back and forth, complacently examining her jewelled fingers. "She needs a strong man like you, Papa, back of her, every single time."

"And she'll have it, if I can manage it. I'll take her down Monday, on the 3.45 train. I'll tell her myself to-morrow when I get ready. Don't you say a word."

Mrs. Kent rocked acquiescently and in silence for a few minutes. Presently she looked up.

"What if he should take a notion to go down there and see her?"

"Edwards?"

"Yes."

"O, he won't do that. He can't afford it. By the way, did you know Mallory was wintering at the 'Laurel-in-the-Pines'?"

"Really?"

"Yes, he is. I was wondering down town to-day what had become of him—thought he must be in Europe. But Baldwin says he's cutting a great swell down there. Horses—two or three traps—suite of rooms—private dinners. He dined the ex-president and his wife this week, Baldwin tells me."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, a very select company and an elegant dinner. How Baldwin finds out so much, I can't tell. He seems to be about correct every single time. Mrs. Candace is back. She came on the Teutonic a fortnight ago. She's visiting at the Graces. The Graces and she were at that dinner.—And who else do you think?"

"I'm sure I can't tell you, Papa."

He stepped in front of his wife, folding his arms dramatically across his breast.

"Portia Max. Little Portia Max! Mrs. Darlington has taken her up and several other ladies. She seems to have popped out of obscurity like a bomb."

"She'll have to go back to it, poor thing, just

as suddenly. Portia was always famous for giving surprises."

"Queer, any way, about that fortune of hers. I feel awfully sorry for her."

"The Maxes had the upper hand a long time."

"It's too bad the change all fell on Portia."

"I don't think she minds it."

"Don't you believe it. Don't you believe it. It stings a girl like that night and day. She has the Max will. Those Maxes always carried everything off serenely."

He walked up and down the room for a few turns in silence.

"There is a very good society down there, you see. I'd like it first-rate if our girl got into the swim."

"Miss Beadle knows no end of people and is a tireless manager."

"She won't count for a particle more than a chaperon. If the Ortons had carried out their first plan, Millicent would be all right. They are going South, however. Don't you know anybody down there, Mamma? I should think out of your large visiting-list you could find a lady or two who might be useful."

"I know the Graces. Mrs. Grace is very airy though. I wouldn't like to make an advance and be snubbed."

"I'd run the risk this time."

“ Very well, Papa, if you think best.”

It will be seen from the preceding conversation that although the Kents had ambitions for Millicent, their social position was not so clearly defined as their wealth. They had brought their only daughter up with great care. They had introduced her in December with a reception, following this with a series of dinner dances and a succession of theatre and opera parties. She had gone out constantly, met a great many men, and as far as her own view of the winter was concerned, had had a very satisfactory season. The truth remained, however, that she kept just on the edge of the circle her parents were eager to have her enter and towards which she herself had aspirations.

Throughout the winter she had seen a great deal of young Edwards. He had been much at the house. He had even been of service in introducing other fellows, one or two of them men whose acquaintance flattered Mrs. Kent. But the end of the season had come, and Millicent was not advantageously engaged. Her observing parents realized that she must be withdrawn from action and prepared for the summer gaieties by a long rest. They had selected Lakewood as a place where she could at least be seen to advantage, talked about enough to keep her name in print and in current society gossip—and, what

was also of necessity, taken off their hands for a short period while they went over to London to determine on the advisability of renting a house there for the season.

Mrs. Kent had met Mrs. Grace at dinners twice, and had entertained her at lunch once. All the advances had been made on her side, however, and she shrank from making another.—“Still, if Papa said to do it, it was doubtless the most expedient step to take.”

She wrote the letter on her best Tiffany paper, to the effect that her health called her to England for a few weeks and her darling daughter must in consequence be deprived of a mother's care in the interval. She ventured to avail herself of her delightful acquaintance with Mrs. Grace to beg that lady to call on Millicent, if undoubtedly numerous engagements would permit, although she felt she was taking a liberty she would hardly dare assume if dear Millicent were not such an enthusiastic admirer of Mrs. Grace, etc.

When the note was finished, Mr. Kent glanced it over.

“That'll do, I guess,” he said approvingly. “Don't you think you could write another to Mrs. Candace?”

She looked up frightened. “I wouldn't dare. If Mrs. Grace does the kind thing, Millicent will

be sure to meet Mrs. Candace. I wish she could make an impression there."

"What if Mallory should fancy Mrs. Candace."

"Mallory! He won't. He'll never fancy anybody. They say he is absolutely indifferent to women."

"Now I have heard he is a great admirer of them."

"O, in a general way. Mrs. Candace likes men too—but so impersonally. Everybody says she will never marry again."

They talked for some time in the familiar way people do of those whose wealth, position or fame makes them interesting. And yet neither of them knew Bryan Mallory except by sight. Mrs. Kent had served one winter on a charity committee with Mrs. Candace, but that was five years ago; she had gotten no further in conversation with her associate than the purpose of their committee required.

"Well, we have done all we can."

"I am sure we have, Papa. Any way, I am too sleepy and tired to think further about the matter now."

"Give me your letter, and I will leave it at the office as I go down. I promised Baldwin to have a smoke with him and talk over the stock of the 'Alaska preferred.' Go to bed, Mamma, for I may be late."

CHAPTER V.

THE following evening, Millicent dined alone with her father.

He was a handsome man and carried his good looks with equanimity although not with elegance. He had blue eyes, with the violet tinge of a girl's when he was pleased ; but they were steely and cold ordinarily. His hair was abundant, black and slightly wavy, and his mutton-chop whiskers of the same color were so thick, coarse and bristling that they looked as if rooted in the bone.

His blue necktie with its single diamond increased the excellence of his complexion and his aspect of sunny middle-age.

He was of good, middle-class stock. He had fought his way year by year down town, was respected for his shrewdness, watched closely for duplicity in business, which had at least never been discovered, had lately been conspicuous in charities, owned a noticeable house in the sixties, supported a missionary in Burmah, and a school in South America : he was all in all a fair representative of a successful money-making man of the Metropolis who gathers in thousands with his

right hand and distributes hundreds with his left without too much show and with sufficient publicity to keep himself talked about and with favorable comments uppermost.

He loved his wife, or rather he loved the perfect feminine expression of his own will in Mrs. Kent. Millicent he feared while very fond of her. He was not afraid of asserting his authority over her, but he was uncertain as to how she would act if it became necessary to coerce her. Such a condition of affairs had never hitherto presented itself, and this Sunday evening as he walked into the big, quiet, richly-appointed and brilliantly lighted dining-hall, he was proud and happy as the father of such a fine-looking girl.

They were a noticeable couple as they sat down and especially this evening, when, as sometimes happens in such a well-ordered, exclusive atmosphere as that of the "Buckingham," waves of human ugliness or commonplaceness filled the most conspicuous places.

There were one or two exceptions, and these the young girl at once noticed.

There was a large round table occupied by a Turkish family whose fine manners and unusualness she found most interesting. At another table a family of six were seated. All were squat and homely, but overflowing with pretty, admiring attentions to one another. There was

a table at which two men sat. Their faces were mottled with red spots, their noses swollen, their eyes bleared, vigilant and aged. Evidently their holiday and their good-living had come too late to be enjoyed. A monstrously fat woman entered, convoyed by four tall, cadaverous, anxious-looking men, grave to melancholy, and each attentive to see that she should be well seated.

Millicent thought of the queens of a tribe of African savages whose value and fame for beauty increased in direct proportion to their size.

She however forgot everybody else in watching a trio momentarily filling the main entrance, for they carried themselves with that superabundant self-assertion once typically American, but now almost obsolete in such hotels as the "Buckingham."

The group comprised an elderly woman, her daughter, and a young man. They stood a little behind one another in the order mentioned. They had a long discussion with the head-waiter. There was a pantomime in which the vacant tables were viewed, and a serious conference then followed as to the particular eligibility of each. Gradually the younger woman stepped in advance of the others, adjusted two long-stemmed, deep-red roses on her bodice and made what she evidently regarded as an elaborate and formal entrance. The others followed.

The ladies had dressed for dinner, and in this respect alone presented a marked contrast to the other women present, who, while well clad, wore unobtrusive gowns. Everything about everybody else in the rich, noiseless, quietly-appointed room was calculated to avoid notice ; but it was otherwise with this trio. Their appearance afforded the idea that the " Buckingham " had personified itself and was now about to entertain them at a state dinner.

They took a table next to that of the Kents.

Millicent heard the young man call the older lady Mrs. Lorriève. Presently she heard the younger woman say mamma with the accent very much on the last syllable. She did not know why she should be so surprised not to hear " Ma," instead.

Mrs. Lorriève wore a black velvet gown, the bodice of which was much trimmed with white lace. The lace fell away also in ample fulness from her fat, wrinkled fingers stiff with gems. Her face was animated by an odd mixture of cunning, good-nature, vanity and generosity. Her composure, though admirable, was plebeian.

The younger people, who had kindly, vacant faces, understood themselves somewhat better, but did not make an atmosphere so distinctly their own.

Millicent was immensely surprised on leaving

the dining-room to have to wait while her father shook hands with Mrs. Lorriève who had hypnotized him with her small black eyes to such purpose when he rose that he could not do otherwise. He dexterously tried to hide his daughter, but it was of no avail, for she heard with amusing wonder Mrs. Lorriève say,—

“ You hev yer darter with you. She favors you too. And how’s your wife ? ”

“ Thank you, Mrs. Kent is very unwell.”

“ Ah, I’m sorry. I’d hoped when I saw you I’d hev the pleasure of meetin’ her.” She leaned in order to look behind him.

He bowed and turned away, but Mrs. Lorriève touched Millicent to arrest her.

“ How do you do, mi dear ? I’m glad to meet you for yer father’s sake. Me and him heve ben good frinds this long time.”

“ Daughter,” said Mr. Kent severely, turning back, “ Mrs. Lorriève.”

Millicent bowed.

“ Mi darter Daisy.” She waved her fat hand to the young woman in question.

Millicent bowed again very stiffly.

“ And Mr. Sims.” The unction with which this name was spoken was indescribable.

Mr. Sims half rose from his chair and nodded delightedly but timidly, extending his hand which she did not see.

They passed on, but Mrs. Lorriève found time to say,—

“ I’d be glad to see you in mi parlor—number twinty-nine—any time ! ”

When the Kents had left the elevator and were walking toward their rooms, Millicent exclaimed,

“ What horrid people ! Who are they ? ”

Her father laughed disagreeably.

“ They hail from Boston at present. I’d take all my meals in my room rather than have another such encounter. ”

“ But, papa ! She said you were friends, you and she. What did she mean ? ”

“ It was a bit of Irish brag. ”

“ A brogue with a French name, too. That was absurd, wasn’t it. ”

He laughed again, but irritately.

“ Mr. Lorriève was a prominent city official and while in office waxed rich. Originally he was a carpenter, then a contractor, then, as I said, a municipal officer. And now—he is—Lord knows what—everything ! ”

There was vexation, even anger, in his voice.

“ But papa—that doesn’t explain how you came to know his horrid, vulgar wife. ”

“ If a business man, child, attempted to explain his acquaintances, it would take the rest of his life. I bought some houses of her

husband, as I thought, but it turned out that the deeds were in her name. We were a whole year in arranging the affair. If you ever become a managing woman, dear, I'll disown you. They are increasing like weeds and torment a man's life out of him at every turn he takes. By the way, I find I shall have the leisure to run down to Lakewood with you to-morrow afternoon, so be ready for the late train."

The girl looked at him with a mixture of curiosity and surprise. She had seldom seen him so excited. The impression of Mrs. Lorriève deepened in consequence. However, there was no time to think further of these people, for he had delighted her at dinner by offering to take her to an evening mission service.

CHAPTER VI.

"I'M sorry, Alice, to leave you here alone, dreadfully sorry!"

Mr. Caruthers stood in front of his wife, his hands behind him, his back towards the great fireplace in the main hall of "The Lakewood."

Mrs. Caruthers was sitting in one of the cushioned leather rockers. Her embroidery fell into her lap. She looked bewildered.

"I can't stay in a place like this—alone!"

"I don't see why! You will be lonesome, of course, but you can have so many comforts here. I'd rather have you stop here than at a cottage."

He spoke persuasively.

"I'll fly out to Denver and I'll fly back just as soon as we can possibly adjust this mine business. How'd you like to go along?" he asked all at once, eagerly.

She shook her head. "Father is too feeble. I must be where I can reach him at a moment's notice."

Mr. Caruthers was devoted to his wife, but his

confidence in her ability to take care of herself was absolute.

Although she had the kind of beauty which makes every man a knight-errant to its possessor, she also had the resources of the best type of American woman. She merely shrank from the isolation which gives one a poignant sense of solitude in an immense hotel, and where acquaintances may be met every day, but perhaps not a single friend in a month.

"It isn't that I can't take care of myself well enough—at least better than anybody else can when you are gone"—and she gave him a pretty, vanishing smile. "But I shall miss you so, here. Why, it will be dreadful!"

A tender light flashed into his eyes. "How would you like to have Perth come down?"

"He couldn't leave his business. He has just started—and such difficulty as he had in finding something eligible to do. It would ruin his prospects to take him away from the bank now. If it were only last year, I would say Perth by all means. Somebody, you know, to go in to meals with me, or to church on Sundays, and perambulate the corridors with. I can't stay in my rooms all the time."

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Alice. While I'm in the City to-day, I'll try to arrange at the bank to have Perth get there an hour later in the

mornings till I return. He can then come down afternoons, be with you over Sundays, do us a favor, and have a fine time himself."

"Won't it be a great expense, Tom?"

"Oh, if you feel happier about my leaving, I shall not mind the expense. And then, possibly, I may have to be gone longer than I now foresee. Here's the stage. Good-bye for a few hours," and nodding brightly he picked up his overcoat, lying on a chair, put it on as he went, and followed the moving procession to the long, bright stages standing in file under and near the portecochère.

Alice gathered up her embroidery, went slowly after to the enclosed porch, watched him take his place in the stage, and did not turn away till he was out of sight.

Perth Edwards was her only cousin. She was very fond of him. It was through her husband's influence he was now teller in the Dome bank. On his part, there was the worshipful admiration a young man of twenty-two has for a woman of thirty. He sometimes found himself divided in allegiance between Millicent's large, conspicuous style of beauty and Mrs. Caruthers' blonde, slender elegance. They were the only two women, however, who awoke a thought of chivalry in him, for he was full of business ambition.

After a talk with the cashier of the Dome, Mr. Caruthers went up to Perth's pigeon-hole.

The young man did not look up at once. He was counting and separating a pile of bills. When he did glance out his eye had a cold, expressionless stare. His face was impassive.

"Glad to see you wearing the bank aspect so early, Perth. How are you getting along?"

"First-rate." His manly face became personal. His clear gray eyes shone with health and activity.

"How is Alice?" he asked in an affectionate voice.

"Alice is well—the prettiest woman at Lakewood!" Caruthers lowered his voice slightly and nodded convincingly.

"She is the prettiest woman I've ever"—

He stopped ingenuously, a faint color suffusing his face.

"Got it already, Perth? I thought better of you. Who is it?"

Not to be abashed, the young man stared at Caruthers with his chin set. Then he laughed, saying he would have to reserve his confidences for a more private opportunity.

"All right!" after a long, teasing look.—"I have come to make you an offer. You see nothing succeeds like success."

Perth put his pencil behind his ear and became alert.

"I've got to go to Denver to-morrow. I want Alice to stay at Lakewood. The air is doing her good. She rides out every day. It's altogether the best place to leave her. Besides, she can't be far away on account of her father. Now what I want you to do is to go down there afternoons, spend your Sundays with her and wait on her generally between banking hours till I get back."

The young man's face flushed. His eyes glowed. He put his hands in his pockets and looked eagerly, although with considerable perplexity, at Caruthers. He grew embarrassed. Visions of unthought-of opportunities with Millicent spread before him: other visions of a salary of a thousand a year also occupied the fore-ground.

"What's the matter?" said Caruthers sternly, pretending not to understand.

"I'd like to do it—but,—don't you see? a fellow on my salary would be bankrupt after a month at the 'Lakewood'."

"Do you mean to say if it were not a question of money"—

"I'd go in a minute, and consider myself lucky."

"Oh, if that is all, we will soon fix matters."

He drew his pocket-book from his breast, took

out a blank check, filled it, and handed it to Perth.

“There, put this to your account. It’ll keep you and give you a small sum to be generous with if that girl who has made you a traitor to Alice should appear.”

Perth now blushed so violently that Caruthers brought his fist down on the shelf of the pigeon-hole with a bang.—“I declare!”

Both laughed heartily, the young man pretending to read the check. He put it aside presently, thanking Caruthers, and with an effort towards regaining his composure, said,

“When do you want me to begin?”

“To-morrow.”

“I’ll have to see if I can get in here later, mornings.”

“It is all arranged. If you are on hand at 10:30 it’ll be all right.”

“Well, Caruthers, I must say you have done a jolly thing for me, and on my part I’ll take splendid care of Alice. I’ll turn myself into a clown, if necessary, to amuse her.”

“O, she is a little more intellectual than that. I guess you will neither of you have any difficulty in making time pass. Good-bye, then. Take the train to-morrow that will bring you there for seven o’clock dinner with my wife. You will find her looking for you. Good-bye!”

The taste growing out of our mixed races and consequent composite features and coloring gives the precedence to complexions not striking but harmonious and to a beauty dependent on expression, yet there is a lingering fondness on the part of all lovers of the beautiful for the distinctively blonde and brunette types. Watch how eagerly men and women will turn to catch a glimpse of the face, if they notice a mass of hair in coils of burnished gold or braids of blue black or the rich peculiar color blending with an olive complexion.

Mrs. Caruthers was brilliantly blonde. She was above the usual height. All her lines were long, slender, yet curved. Her abundant hair, of a vivid golden hue, waved from the nape of her neck and from her round, high forehead to a loose coil twisted on the top of her head. This arrangement displayed her small, highly convoluted ears. Her features, while full, were long and unusual and beautiful. So much radiance of eyes, lips, complexion and hair seemed at first sight unnatural, but they were genuine and simply so perfect that it took a little time to become accustomed to them. But finally, when the impression of her beauty was made, it was unique.

Her gaze was clear and steady. One could look in vain into those deep almost solemn blue eyes for a hint of insincerity. One could watch

every expression of her full, arched, mobile and red lips for a suggestion of too passionate feeling. Her mouth was an intensely human, yet wonderfully sweet, pure, determined feature, and its color and form were emphasized by teeth evenly set and startlingly white. Neither her character nor her mind was keyed to concert pitch. She had a few dominant traits and they were always consistently manifested. She either loved or hated. She was literal yet imaginative and keen in her perceptions of actual conditions and influences. She was indeed that rare woman whom one oftener dreams about than meets—beautiful, practical, and with sufficient sentiment to keep her interested in humanity at large.

The corridors of the "Lakewood" are very spacious, and the double T which they make on each floor greatly increases their space for promenaders.

After her husband's departure, Mrs. Caruthers folded her embroidery, put it in a fancy silk bag she carried on her arm, stood irresolutely a few moments before the fire, her back turned towards the scattered groups seated in the large central hall, the informal gathering-place of the hotel. She then went to the news stand to her right and asked for the latest periodical. While waiting for the magazine she observed for the first time

that morning the threatening aspect of the weather.

Sombre pines were tossing in a high wind, and a squall of snow drearier for the struggling sunshine scurried like a driven mist in the air. It was no morning for a walk. She therefore slowly sauntered down the long corridor—then back and forth a score of times through the deserted side one. She did not feel lonely. She had already thoroughly adjusted herself to her husband's approaching absence. She had even fixed her thoughts with a glad, calm anticipation on his return.

It would be pleasant to see so much of Perth. He was like a younger brother. She had never had brothers or sisters or young relatives of any degree except this one cousin. She thought of her father, querulous, hugging solitude and cherishing the pessimisms of age. "God preserve me from an unhappy old age," she involuntarily sighed.

Constitutionally and through circumstances she was less trammelled by prejudice than most women. She had had no hard struggles in her life. Her environment, though not in any way her own creation, suited her. Her husband had been selected for her by her parents, but he proved to be the man with whom she fell in love. Her admirable self-poise has neither fostered self-

ishness nor caused mental stagnation. According to the dramatic issues of most lives, if trouble ever visited her it would come like a cyclone or with its first appearance usher in a long train of misfortunes.

She had really lived thus far in an earthly paradise. Her appearance, her expression, the sweetness of her charity, rather limited, it is true, by her happiness and prosperity, but genuine, gave her an atmosphere which arrested the notice of the sick, the discouraged, the unsuccessful. It would seem as if the chief good she was born to accomplish was to be a kind of radiant sundial to prove to luckless mortals that the sun does shine and that there are "fields of living green" in the world.

While she walked, her princess gown of dark green sweeping the carpet, her work-bag of the same color delicately embroidered in pink hanging from her wrist, her hands clasped in front of her, she looked like some harbinger of spring.

She had reached the end of the short corridor. As she turned to retrace her steps, a door near the opposite end opened and a lady appeared. Their meeting was inevitable.

They came nearer, and as they did so, a furtive gleam of recognition swept over the features of the shorter woman. Alice Caruthers now looked

up. A frank, surprised and delighted smile overspread her face. She extended her hand.

The relief, subtle, dignified and evanescent as it was that glimmered in the other's dark eyes was immense. She as frankly grasped those long, white, pink-tipped fingers in her small delicately moulded olive hand.

"Naomi Beno, is it not?"

"Mrs. Adena now—and you, are you still Alice Downing?"

"Mrs. Caruthers. I haven't seen you since we were at school. You have changed."

"I have lived abroad ten years. You have not changed much," and Mrs. Adena looked at her with restrained admiration.

Alice laughed. "My husband tells me I am like a carefully preserved rose, that I will never dry up, or fade, or change—but just fall to pieces one of these fine days."

Naomi heaved a deep sigh from her full chest. She was growing stout. But she was very beautiful.

Alice thought of the Madonnas of Raphael's later style, and yet there was a touch of spirit about Naomi as though Luini's brush had given her a little of the Venetian glow and girlishness to animate her features with the spiritual longing one sees once in a great while in the Hebrew physiognomy.

"Are you to be here long?" asked Alice.

"Through March, and perhaps a little later.

"And I too. Will you not come to my parlor some morning—and talk over old times?"

Naomi smiled radiantly. She was now sure that Mrs. Caruthers did not wish the acquaintance to be merely a speaking one.

"Thank you; yes."

"Come any day," and Alice half turned to walk on.

"I shall be delighted to do so." Naomi bowed and proceeded down the long corridor.

Alice finished her walk to the end of the shorter hall and came back to where the conversation had taken place.

Mrs. Adena was talking with a man at the entrance to one of the parlors. The light fell across the room from the enclosed rotunda on the opposite side, enveloping the Jewess. Her face was in profile. Alice was struck with its majesty. She looked at it as if it were some rare painting.

Naomi wore her hair unconventionally. It was parted, lying in silky waves on either side of her forehead and braided in a thick, low, glossy coil. Her full yet delicate features revealed the most exquisite oriental symmetry. There were languor and tenderness, passion and purity in the gently swelling contour of her dark, clear cheeks

and sensitive chin, the lines of which curved exquisitely till they met the throat which still had the peculiar fulness of youth.

And yet, Naomi, Alice reflected, was about her own age. Even the rather short figure, notwithstanding its rotundity, retained a hint of girlish elasticity; it possessed a sweet motherliness too. Alice sighed, wondering if Naomi had received the one gift denied her—children.

CHAPTER VII.

FINDING herself very much fatigued the morning after Portia's lecture, Mrs. Grace did not go down to breakfast. Her husband and Mrs. Candace were thus left to each other's resources.

Mr. Grace was a big, pink-hued fellow with a sandy moustache and a puffing, semi-belligerent way of talking. Mrs. Candace thought it a pity he could not appear in knee breeches, ruffled shirt front and lace frills. He would have fitted the house better, which was, however, still too new, too glaringly harmonious and too ultra-colonial for people to avoid the impression that they also were pieces of furniture.

Mrs. Candace was not colonial in the slightest. Her lavender tea-gown belonged to the winter style of '92. Her pale-brown hair was worn pompadour simply because this mode fitted her rather large features, emphasizing the starry yet gentle expression of her whole face. She had a fine, free step, an elegant figure, and that indescribable personality denominated style, but usually the full outcome of the highest refinement of thought and life. She was of good American

stock, which was evident in her speech, her views and her appearance. Even newly-made Boston friends did not try to place her genealogically. Occasional efforts of this kind that she did encounter were met by such a cool indifference that they were not repeated. There was only one class of human beings before whom she would have asserted the value of birth, family traditions and culture, and this she never encountered, the pauper and criminal immigrants of plethoric Europe. Among her own country men and country women she insisted on being a simple American, which meant to her what being a Roman did to Cincinnatus and the Gracchi. She was therefore rigidly proud of her nationality and all which it implied. In England, having long before exhausted the curiosity of a mere sight-seer, she declined the weariness of a presentation to the Queen. She would have been rather interested to see the "Queen of Great Britain and Empress of the Indies" if it had come in her way to do so; but to go out of her way for such a purpose was too fatiguing. In Rome, she had a glimpse of the Pope at St. Peter's, but when told she might behold him face to face by undergoing certain osculatory indignities wholly on her part, she looked at her informant with a quelling mildness, much as the Virgin Mary or one of the Vestal Virgins would be supposed to have done

under similar circumstances. She had had a personal acquaintance with three of the Presidents of the United States, and this she considered an honor. She had never gone to Washington, though, to witness an inauguration. Where she was invited, there she went, if inclination and opportunity served. She was rather capricious and unreasonable in the way of forming friendships, but she was steadfast to all that the word friendship implied. Sooner or later, too, others discovered valuable intrinsic qualities in people whom she visited or with whom she affiliated.

Mr. Grace and she got under way, so to speak, with their breakfast—each, though not appearing to do so, trying to find out what the other would enjoy talking about most. She soon observed that his wife made a congenial theme.

“Is Mrs. Grace doing anything for her cough?”

He looked up quickly. His pale eyes wore a gratified look.

“She is doing something all the time, and the fact is, Mrs. Candace, I’m awfully worried. You see we knocked about the South last winter, and the winter before we spent at Nice and in Algiers. But nothing seemed to do her much good. We got as sick—as sick as two dogs—if you will excuse the expression, of making a camping-ground of the world—and so we came down here last

Autumn, took this house, furnished it, and moved in on the first of November. I tell you life's been worth living since then."

He fumbled in his pocket, drew out a fresh silk handkerchief and, rolling it into a loose wad, mopped his florid face.

"The only thing to spoil it all is Ethel's health." He looked furtively around. The butler had stepped into the pantry. He leaned over the table. "She feels so sensitive about it. Both lungs are affected. Rather serious you perceive. She pretends not to believe a word of it—not a word!"

Mrs. Candace looked thoughtful. "I do not think Lakewood was a good place to come to, considering Ethel's gay tastes," she said, after a minute's reflection.

"Not very, but infinitely better than New York. Here we go out only two or three nights a week, and there it would have been every night. It was ever so good in you to come to see us, Mrs. Candace, and perhaps while you are here you can influence my wife. Everybody seems to do just about what you want them to," and he looked at her with a kind of boyish appeal that was very pleasing. "Now if she would just keep her room a couple of weeks! As soon as the spring thoroughly opens, we shall cross, making our way slowly to the Engadine for the summer.

Ethel will be all right again for a season, if she pulls through March without an illness. I was awfully surprised when your letter came accepting my wife's invitation. We had had a wager over it. She declared you would come, and I said you wouldn't. You should have heard her when she found out she had won."

"Of course she knew I would come. She is a great pet with me."

"If you think you could amuse yourself to-day, I'd like to run up to the city. The rest of the week I am at your service."

"Please do not let my visit make any troublesome difference in your life. I need to-day for bringing up confidences with Ethel."

A few years before she would have said, "do not let my coming make any difference." She was however frank enough with herself and sufficiently human to have discovered long ago that perhaps the most absolutely unbearable things in the world are hosts and hostesses who do not incommode themselves in the slightest. She knew perfectly well that the reason she got along with everyone and why everybody made a favorite of her was because she neither taxed their human nature nor her own, either, in social relations, to an unreasonable extent.

After breakfast, she wandered through the lower rooms with an odd little smile hovering

about the corners of her mouth. She thought how such a house would tire her to death. Everything was for ornament, for effect, much of it luxuriously comfortable, and yet the whole was so unhomelike. Where the difficulty lay, she could hardly tell—unless it were in proportion.

The dining-room was so large, substantial and splendid, the library so meagre and orderly; the draperies were so costly, the books and pictures relatively so much less so. There was a grand piano but no stacks of music visible. A banjo with a pink ribbon run through the handle lay on one of the drawing-room divans. There was an enormous open fire burning in the great hall. Over the mantel was some ancient armor, placed there with the thoughtless anachronism of decorators. The polished oak had none of the mellow tints of age. The keen, gaunt March sunshine flooding the large spaces sought the Ghiordes and fine Ivan rugs as if its duty were to give a note of antiquity to a mansion patterned after the style of a century ago.

A woman, like a cat, feels better after taking her bearings, and so Mrs. Candace, having studied more than to her heart's content downstairs effects, began slowly to ascend to the next floor.

She liked the upper hall. It was youthful, gay, as joyous as the Trianon—but Ethel was

young, too, and this upper hall really had the merit of her individuality.

Stepping into her own room, its gorgeousness struck her as if with a first view. Delightfully pretty, too, for a guest chamber, she admitted.

The carpet had a white ground strewn with pink roses. The walls hung with silk draperies repeated in the furniture covering were in fervid pinks relieved by a chintz pattern, up and down which revelled creamy roses with delicate green stems and leaves. The furniture in white elaborately decorated in gold was as new as the day, and its coverings of linens, laces, plushes and silks were rich and numberless.

There was a fine, big white writing-desk open and filled with paper bearing Ethel's crest in metal colors. The desk had so many appointments in silver that in writing a letter or two the night before Mrs. Candace had put half of them away in a drawer. She needed more space for her arms.

Every picture in the room displayed Cupid in his more or less famous amatory exploits—except two, and one of these was a pair of birds billing on the edge of a lake strewn with lilies, and the other was a huge one in oil of splendid double roses falling to pieces from sheer full-blown magnificence.

The silk sachets in the drawers were scented

with attar of roses. The very Bible, on a small prie-dieu in one corner, was bound in quilted white satin, on either cover of which was painted an exquisite rose. To Elizabeth the large ivory crucifix over the prie-dieu looked very much out of place in this room. She found herself saying softly : " The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

She had found it necessary in the middle of the night, although a raw, bitter wind was already blowing a gale in the room, to open another window, to reduce the stifling rose perfume that was everywhere and in everything, even in the draperies of her bed.

After sitting a few minutes before the freshly made fire on the hearth, a look of deep gravity on her own still youthful face, she rose with a heavy sigh and went across the hall to the chamber of her young hostess.

The door was slightly ajar.

" May I come in ? "

" O, do please ! "

Ethel was propped up in bed, her blonde hair already elaborately arranged and showing with effect against the lace-trimmed pillow slips. An invalid's table was set in front of her. The dainty breakfast had evidently just been brought in.



"THE DAINTY BREAKFAST HAD EVIDENTLY JUST BEEN BROUGHT IN."—Page 72.

“ I hope you will forgive my laziness, for that is all it is—sheer, downright laziness. Theodore won’t let me have the fatigue of getting up till I’ve had my breakfast, and besides,” she smiled prettily, “ I’ll be frank enough to say I’ve gotten so much used to breakfasting in this way that it would be a great trial to change the habit. I’m strong enough though—just as strong as I can be this winter. Did you have a good breakfast? Was everything all right? Was Buxton attentive?

“ The breakfast and Buxton, too, were perfect.”

“ You must remember if you want yours in your room any morning, or every morning, you can have it there just as well as not. Name the hour the night before to my maid. The cook, the butler, the whole menagerie, are trained to this sort of thing. Theodore breakfasts upstairs half the time.”

“ I never do, my dear, at least I don’t think I have taken a meal in my room in several years. If it is customary for your guests, though—” Mrs. Candace added thoughtfully.

“ Oh, customary ! Anything anybody likes to do is customary in this house. That, to my mind, is the beauty of housekeeping. Theodore and I have known what living is since we set up our establishment.”

"Don't you have the universal trouble with servants?"

"Not we. I have hit upon a plan I consider masterly. Whenever a man or maid begins to grumble, I raise the wages. I have done it all round twice only since November. We are as peaceful here in consequence as a January day on the Tuscaloosa. So anything you want, Mrs. Candace, ask for it, for it is well paid for."

"I think you are a terribly luxurious, extravagant little puss, and doing your full share towards demoralizing servants."

"Do you really think so?" said Ethel, indifferently, while dipping a strawberry into sugar and then holding it by its stem in the sunlight to see its rich color. "I mean to be comfortable. Do you remember when we were in Italy together, what bills I made just for ice? What is money good for unless it is to buy what one wants."

Mrs. Candace drew a willow rocker beside the bed and sat down. She was not disposed to argue; besides, Mrs. Grace looked undeniably tired out and feverish. The high color in a little round spot on either cheek, and her restless, brilliant eyes were pitifully significant.

"How old are you, Ethel?"

"Twenty-two. To think I've been married

three years! It seems but a day. Theodore is lovely, perfect-ly lovely. Isn't he the dearest, biggest old pussy cat you ever saw!"

Mrs. Candace laughed heartily.

"O, he knows he looks like one," said Ethel, enjoying the effect of her words. "My pet name for him is 'Angora'—and he loves cream and soft places as well as I do. You can't think how interested he was in helping furnish the house. He said he liked it better than buying horses or yachting. The library is his taste altogether. He is as vain as a peacock over that room, so do try, if you can, to praise it some day when it comes in naturally."

"I'll do my best."—Elizabeth rocked gently. Ethel looked steadily at her and wonderingly.

"You are the youngest looking woman, and the oldest too. I have puzzled my wits ever since you came to find out what it is. Your skin is as fine and clear as mine, and at least I've a good complexion. And you haven't a line or wrinkle. I think it is your eyes——"

"That are old?"

"Yes. They are such wise eyes. I don't mean they are faded—but they look—oh, so deep and sweet and merry and sad."

"Have you noticed how poorly-shaped they are?"

"They have a look! If I saw your eyes

alone, dear Mrs. Elizabeth, I should say you were at least forty."

"Would you like to know how old I am?"

"I am dying to hear."

"Thirty-two."

"I supposed you were about that, but I didn't know. Ten years older than I am."

"Ten years that have nearly blotted out all the others."

She got up and went to the window. She had no intention of growing deeply confidential with Mrs. Grace. Their friendship from the beginning was not built on this basis. She had learned to love Ethel with some tenderness because she had been of valuable help and comfort to the little woman, and Ethel loved her, after finding in her the feminine protection, plain speaking, and advice she needed. They were distantly related, and the slight blood-connection made a shadowy bond rather pleasant to both.

There was nothing to break the view Mrs. Candace looked out on. The monotony so displeasing to many was restful to her. She was charmed with the simple, bold effects of color before her. The rich green of the pines, the fervid yellow of the soil, the brilliant blue of the sky, and the tiny ripples of the lake, as azure as the heavens above,—all this brightness, cleanliness, and purity of tone had a foreign air to her after

passing several winters on the other side. She longed to go out of doors by herself to explore the path around the lake where already could be seen an occasional brisk pedestrian. Her thoughts at the same time were on her past, which was set apart as a picture in a frame, or like a reflection seen outside a brilliantly lighted room on a dark night—so real, and yet but a phantom. A sacred beautiful past—her life! Was it because she had no future, absolutely no future so far as her own consciousness, ambition, or longing was concerned, that her eyes had the pathos and the mirthfulness others besides Ethel noticed. Yet time never loitered with her, for her warm human interests made her unselfish and sympathetic. The largeness of view, the tolerance and the readiness to be amused upon the surface, which develop occasionally from the possession of wealth, many opportunities and social attractiveness, made her charming. She was always alone in the depths of her heart, but she clung eagerly and appreciatively to such relations as she still had the capacity for forming. She was a woman with many friends, but without one absorbing affection. This temperate state is oftener than not after a big nature is adjusted to it, companioned by contentment, for the mind is singularly free to go on all manner of explorations.

When she turned towards Ethel's chamber again, its heaped-up material splendor jarred upon her. Ethel made such an absurd centre for it all as she held the leg of a bird between her teeth.

The room was furnished with the excessive lavishness of a self-indulgent woman whose pleasure is more in surroundings than in persons. It was all pretty, appropriate, expensive and superfluously abundant. There was even a book-case filled with the works of choice authors, although Ethel read nothing but the daily papers and the current novels—and very little of these.

There were a great many ornaments on all manner of projections. The bureau was a bewildering medley of jeweled ivory pieces for the toilet, while the lounge drawn up before the elaborately tiled fire-place was heaped with costly cushions. An easy-chair of ample dimensions and unfathomable downiness was occupied by a St. Bernard, whose name Rex stood out in great gold letters on his leather collar.

Mrs. Candace began to think of her other friends at Lakewood with a dawning sensation of relief. In the afternoon she would go away for an hour or two to see Mrs. Darlington and Mrs. Caruthers. She had noticed in the morning paper that the Caruthers were at the "Lakewood." And then in the evening Dr. Brighteck would call.

After a week or ten days, if she grew too weary

of upholstery and youth, she would take rooms at the "Laurel-in-the-Pines." She had never been there, but its chateau-like appearance, the trees apparently growing in and through the very house, and the fact that it would be near enough for her to run over and see Ethel every day gave her a liking for it. As soon as she had settled it in her own mind that she had a way of escape, she came back with a pleasant interest to the morning's gossip.

The breakfast having been removed, Mrs. Grace's maid fluttered about the bed, bathing anew her mistress' face and hands. The cambric gown with its embroidery and blue ribbons so becoming to Ethel's frailty and fairness was taken off.

Elizabeth now watched the mysteries of a transformation that with all her knowledge of the world surprised and electrified her.

Draper brought from the dressing-room a white silk gown with bouffant sleeves and cut half low in the neck. This she slipped upon Ethel, then clasped a necklace of very handsome stones—alternate sapphires, diamonds, and rubies—around the slender, exposed throat, changed the pillows so that the little blonde head seemed hardly to crease the fine fresh linen, and, when the tableau seemed completed, gave Mrs. Grace a pair of long lavender suede gloves.

"What, dear Ethel, what are you getting ready for?"

"Why, for calls. For the doctor first, then Portia and whoever happens to come. Theodore said he would ask Dr. Brighteck to step in—or I would have tried to get up earlier. You will excuse my informality with you, won't you?"

"Of course, child; only get well and strong. But I think you are very imprudent to expose your throat in this way. Remember it is March."

"Oh, I am used to it. Why, to-night I shall wear a low dinner dress. If I begin to cover up my throat and neck, I may go on forever."

She began to draw on the gloves.

"I wear these to preserve my hands. Theodore is extravagantly fond of beautiful hands, and mine he thinks the prettiest he has ever seen. It costs a lot though to keep in new gloves morning, noon, and night. Do you think—Portia would mind—if I offered her my old gloves? Our hands are exactly of a size. I don't soil them much, and I never have them cleaned. She could get them cleaned, though, and I should think they would be a help to her. Do you think she would mind?"

"I think she would," said Mrs. Candace crisply. "I don't think she will ever, under any circumstances, reach the 'old clothes' condition."

"Well, I'm glad I asked you. I felt sure you

would know. I wouldn't offend her or hurt her for the world. It is a pity to throw them away, though. That does seem extravagant!"

"Why don't you give Portia something new if you want to make her a present?"

"I don't want to make her a present. I simply want to get rid of the gloves."

"Oh!"

CHAPTER VIII.

PORTIA read several chapters of her story after Mr. Mallory left her. She read compulsorily.

In a short time the sun disappeared from the opening where she was sitting. As soon as it became shady she felt chilly.

She rose, stretched herself slightly, drew a long breath and looked around. The place was as solitary as a desert. There was a light wind tossing the tops of the trees, the sky was vivid. She walked under the trees towards the lake. There was a broad path skirting its entire margin. She could easily walk the three miles before luncheon. Besides, she felt vacuous after her effort of the evening before.

As soon as she had decided to take the walk around the lake, a shadow of solicitude lurking about her mouth passed away. She had been wondering whether she must give up her log in the woods because of Mr. Mallory.

Other people had passed her while she sat there, some looking as if she were a foolhardy young woman doing her best to contract rheumatism, others glancing at her casually and going

on. No one before had ever stopped. She had chosen her haunt far enough away from the hotels to make it seem inaccessible.

She had told Mr. Mallory that she came there every day—"What if I did?" she said defensively to herself. But she wished she had not told him, for while his manner was indifferent and careless, she realized that when he got up and went on, he did not wish to do so.

She was a woman into whom circumstances had drilled many perceptions while leaving her sweet-tempered. She knew it was about the rarest thing in the world, in the society to which Mr. Mallory belonged, and to which she belonged a few years ago, for the poor and the rich to meet together, intimately, familiarly, incidentally, at all hours, and on a perfectly level footing. There were functions, there were occasions, there were places where they could do so and did so; such as funerals, weddings, lectures, concerts, where the function meant numbers rather than exclusiveness dependent on social position and individual expenditure.

Portia had now been a member of both sides of this equation. She understood the separation was the fault of neither side.

The poor had not the money, even if they had family, taste, culture, or the valuable faculty of good company. The rich could not, even if they

would, make themselves the almoners of the poor. She knew that because of a law and logic with which humanity had nothing whatever to do, that "to him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

If Mr. Mallory should want to know her, she couldn't know him. In the first place she boarded in a shabby little cottage on the outskirts of the town. She had a comfortable room at the top of the house, but there was no decent place for callers. If he should ask her to drive behind those high-stepping horses, fastened tandem, she hadn't a hat or a cloak that could bear the elevation of his equipages. It had been all and a little more than she could do to get warm winter flannels and one new dress for the lectures. She unconsciously drew her slender shoulders together as she thought of the inadequacy of that dress for general purposes. She recalled Mrs. Grace's large dressing-room, lined with mirror-panelled-closets for holding Worth and Doucet gowns. She could pack her entire wardrobe into one small trunk; she had felt its meagreness where she was boarding, while gazing at a row of empty hooks in her closet for which she had absolutely no use.

It was three years since she had started on the new life with her pittance of four hundred a year

and an immense wardrobe. She had made over some garments and worn out others, and had been well and often beautifully dressed till this winter. Now she had but three gowns that would bear a woman's casual inspection ; the new one for the lectures and two others.

She was not unhappy. She simply realized she had come to a turning-point where she must retire into a remote country town to live or unearth a talent. She could not contemplate with equanimity a mollusk existence. There wasn't an atom of the barnacle in her nature. When Mrs. Darlington, therefore, proposed the lectures, she grasped eagerly at the opportunity.

Now that she had fairly entered upon her field, she began to shrink from her own limitations and to realize with a singularly honest grasp the possibly evanescent value of the whole situation.

She must finish the course though. Doubtless the public lecture at the hotel and two offers received for separate ones would help eke out her expenses till late spring, and then she could retire for the summer to a farm-house in the Alleghanies. It was not a brilliant prospect, but she did not consider it a cheerless one.

She reached the lake with a little glow in her thin cheeks. There was no longing expectation of delightfully-unforeseen possibilities in the fine

curves of her firmly set lips. Ardent hopes had bidden her farewell.

She glanced at her watch. Yes, she would have time to take the walk around the lake and stop in afterward to see what Ethel wanted.

A long, solitary walk is conducive to retrospection. She became retrospective.

She made several artless attempts to escape from what she knew was for her a dangerous experience. She was perfectly well aware that if she let herself think of the past standing back of the last three years like some wonderful, splendid mirage, she would be completely undone for a day or two. She hadn't time just now for any luxury of memory or feeling that would reduce her working power for the lectures.

She looked at the pines, trying to estimate how old they were and whether it was true, as some said, that the lake was artificial. She did not care whether it was or not. At least the water wasn't condensed steam; it surely came right from the clouds or from dark, cool, gurgling streams finding their way to the surface. And the tall, straight trees, with their stiff needle foliage, no man made them or even grouped them together. The best part of Lakewood was one of God's free acts, and whoever would might own the magnificent skies and the music of the mighty sea of trees stretching for miles to the

ocean like an emerald pavement catching the glow of the sun and making a floor for the feet of the winds.

She walked for a time with a freer, more buoyant step as one of God's children.

And then the memory of old days swept over her with sudden force. Such a little while ago she was the centre, making the best of all the good times for her circle of friends. Alice Downing was now Mrs. Thomas Caruthers; Alice, so lovely, so poor, and so dependent. Portia saw Alice sitting before her, the previous evening, in velvet and jewels, more beautiful than ever, and as sweet still as a June rose. Well, she was glad Tom Caruthers married the girl of his choice and courted her while poor. That was better than to be courted as rich and forgotten when poor. Her flexible under-lip quivered and she dashed a tear aside. Then other features superseded those of Mrs. Caruthers, and in imagination she was walking towards Mrs. Darlington. What a history of apparently fortunate happenings! How Florence Darlington had bloomed into finer physical beauty than her youth gave promise of, and developed into more of a woman than any one dreamed she could be before.— She remembered Florence as a school-girl, a big, good-natured, frolicsome school-girl, not fond of books but a general favorite. And

then had come her trip abroad which had modified her a little. Then had followed her strange, romantic marriage to one whom the people called "the man of destiny." What facile powers of adaptation and perception the unexpected magnificence of her opportunities had revealed in her. It was already no longer easy to dwell on the limitations of a young woman who in a few years had met every notable person of official importance in the country, who with each added social experience had illustrated the capacity of the typical American woman upon whom is thrust an unusual importance. How prudent Florence had been. How general her social knowledge for national purposes had become. Portia seemed to see Mrs. Darlington's alert brown eyes, to be watching the calm, discreet reticence of her manner, as well as her sweet, generous impulsiveness, still only needing the slightest occasion to call it forth. She felt glad for Florence too.

And Elizabeth Hamilton. She was a little older than the rest of them, but always superior, because of some undefinable spiritual foreshadowing accompanying her like a presence. What joy, what sorrow had been hers—deeper sorrow, more varied joy—"happiness beyond what I have the capacity for appreciating," thought Portia. She lingered over the large,

sweet sympathy, the dignity of protection in look and manner she had felt the evening before, paying the glad tribute one woman does to another whose attitude is comprehensive and maternal towards those less fortunately placed. She forgot herself in sincerely rejoicing that Mrs. Candace had wealth still, and in believing that the wealth would be sacrificed rapturously for just one touch of a vanished hand, for "the sound of a voice that is still."

She had been walking very rapidly, her slender body well bent forward, her eyes on the path before her. She said to herself as a final summary: "Of all of us I think I was the best adapted for the change of fortune. There is a kind of toughness about me, a power of resistance."

A stronger flash of sunlight made her look up—"Why, I have completed the circuit of the lake."

She glanced at her watch again. Yes, there was time to see Ethel.

She hurried along a path diverging from the shore. A very few minutes brought her to the Graces.'

"Mrs. Grace asks if you will please come up to her room, Miss," said Draper, appearing presently in the door of the drawing-room.

Throwing her shabby fur aside, Portia followed the maid upstairs.

For a brief instant she was bewildered over Ethel's startling toilet and surroundings. She felt as if she were in a French bedchamber salon of the XVIII Century. Then the illusion passed away.

Ethel had noticed and rejoiced in the impression she made. She was so small, so airy, so really childish, while still always shrewd. She had the vanity of wishing to impress Portia above all others with what must seem unattainable ease and sumptuousness.

"You may go, Draper. I'll ring if I need you."

The plain, middle-aged Scotchwoman withdrew.

Portia noticed with amused astonishment a huge silver bell, as large as a cow-bell, standing on a table beside the bed. It was covered with engraved quotations from Schiller's *Song of the Bell*. Its size was absurdly disproportionate to Ethel's small, slender hand.

They talked a long time about nothings, Portia expecting every minute an explanation why Ethel had begged her so particularly to come in this morning, for their friendship was not of a nature to warrant informal visiting. A little clock on the mantel struck one. Portia rose and said she must go.

"Come again, do. I am so glad to see you looking perfectly well after last night. You were

so pale when you came downstairs that I was afraid for a minute you would break down. You didn't though," added Ethel in a tone of praise. "You went right through that lecture as if you knew it by rote. What a memory!"

Portia did not feel very much complimented. She was quite sure, however, that Ethel conveyed what must have been the general impression—"a lesson learned, a feat of memory."

"Good-bye. Come again soon. Oh, do not make an engagement for next Thursday evening. I'm going to give a dinner, and I want you here. You haven't any engagement, have you?"

"No."

"Then you will come?"

"Thank you," said Portia pleasantly, nodding assent, and wondering if it were the dinner Mrs. Grace had in mind when she begged her to be sure to call. She would rather have received the first intimation by letter. This would have given her time to think it over before accepting or declining. On the way home she realized that she had accepted with impulsive readiness.

The dinner-party was a sudden thought on Ethel's part, having its birth after Portia had risen to go. It excused the gloves to her conscience. How glad she was she hadn't made that blunder.

"She doesn't look like 'old clothes'," thought Ethel, after Portia had left. "Her dress was

worn. She isn't much larger than I am, but I couldn't look as well dressed as she did to-day and be so much out of fashion."

She gazed out of the window with momentary gravity. "What if reverses should strike her some time—suddenly as they had Miss Max."

"They couldn't!" she said aloud.

Then she lifted the huge bell with some effort and rang for Draper.

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. CANDACE was famous among her friends for visiting qualities.

She was witty and sunny-tempered without the tiresome brightness which sucks out the vitality of others. She shone as a distinct individuality, while not obliterating the personality of her hostess. She said many complimentary things, not flattering, but discriminating. She had a truly kind heart and an abundant charity, far removed from the feline amiability which patronizes the reputation or character of others. She was a woman sound to the core, a friend to be trusted.

It was this womanliness, this friendliness without girlish enthusiasms, added to a many-sided facility, which made her a constant surprise; the envious and indifferent were forced to acquiesce in the epithet invariably applied to her—a charming woman.

Charming women get tired. The day had proved a terribly long, monotonous one to Elizabeth. She had read and talked with Ethel. She had glanced over the morning paper and a new magazine. She had relieved Mrs. Grace by mutual

agreement in keeping up a sparkling conversation with a chance guest at lunch. She had driven an hour with Ethel in the pines. Now she was dressed for dinner and in the drawing-room a whole hour before that ceremonious meal would be served.

Mr. Grace had come home, and it was safe to presume that he and his wife were happy in sharing confidences after a day's separation.

The strange, neutral loneliness of a solitary life settled upon Mrs. Candace.

She walked slowly up and down the long room, beautified in the dim light of turned down burners and the red glow from a tall, shaded lamp. The curtains were not drawn. The waning daylight maintained an obstinate supremacy.

She went to the window. How cold and bleak and colorless everything looked.

The wide drive curving to the west was deserted. The wind had died away, and the woods on the opposite side of the lake looked like an enormous patch of ink against the pale blue-gray sky.

A figure appeared above the slope leading to the water. She watched it striding across the snow and spongy turf.

It was Dr. Brighteck.

Presently he reached the main thoroughfare of the park-like enclosure she was overlooking. Glancing at the house as he drew near, he saw her at the window.

A fleeting pang swept over her. Dr. Brighteck had been her first lover. How many years ago it seemed now. He had been able to gradually assume the place of a friend. In their case the relation had proved a harmless one, no gaucheries ever having resulted from it. She gave him a great deal of praise in her secret soul, for she realized it naturally had depended on him more than on her that their mutual attitude had continued so open and cordial.

As he came nearer, the eerie loneliness that had settled into the very pores of her being passed away. One lover for a life-time—one husband—was her half-formulated thought, but friends as many as God will send, for she felt what an unspeakable loss it would be if she lost her hold on Dr. Brighteck.

She met him at the door, lingering in the hall while he jerked one short arm and then the other out of his overcoat. She looked at him with welcoming frankness, and he kept gazing at her while getting out of his coat as if the mere sight of her did him good.

“How are you?” He held out both hands.

She took them and they stood a second face to face, a genuine trust on either side—that close hand-clasp a fearless, silent acquiescence on the part of both that they could dare be friends.

“I thought I would drop in to dinner after all,”

he said, stepping aside to let her pass into the drawing-room. "It is a wonderfully lonesome night, don't you think so? It must be this March air."

"I was feeling a bit eerie, too, before I saw you. It is all gone now. I think we shall find it cosier in the library. There is an open fire there."

They sat down on either side of the hearth.

Dr. Brighteck looked around, warming his hands while he did so. "A nice sitting-room, this. Not much of a library."

"They will build a house of their own one of these days, when they are older—when they have more books."

"More dishes, you mean. You need never expect to see books accumulate around Theodore and Ethel. Well, it takes all kinds to make a world. Theodore is a first-rate fellow—first-rate; I haven't a bit of fault to find with him. It is poor taste to pick a fellow's house to pieces when you come in to break bread with him, isn't it?"

"You were thinking aloud."

He smiled appreciatively. "How you do manage to keep a fellow self-respecting."

"I wouldn't judge every man as gently as I do you. I am sure you would just as soon tell Theodore as me that you think his library inadequate."

"I dare say. It would be a blunder, however, wouldn't it? I believe in allowing every poor

human wretch the comfort of complacency as long as possible ”

She smiled. She perceived there would soon be nothing left of Mr. Grace or his home, if they continued. Dr. Brighteck had more dangerous rights of relationship than she, for he was first cousin to their host. For herself, she had never believed in the gratuitous plain-speaking, often the only indication of what the old Saxons called the blood-bond.

“ Tell me about the ‘ Laurel-in-the-Pines,’ ” she said, presently.

He glanced at her discriminatingly. He rubbed his plump hands together a few times, dropped his eyes on the floor, a smile hovering about his full, keen, yet generous mouth.

“ It wouldn’t be a bad place at all—in case you wanted to make a change. I’m stopping there. So is Mallory, by the way. Between us we would take good care of you.”

“ You are very suspicious. I haven’t said I dreamed of making a change.”

“ I’ll give you my word for it—you can’t stand it here more than a week. Come over to the ‘ Laurel-in-the-Pines ’—do ! You can run in here every day to see how Ethel is getting along. Poor Ethel ! ” He shook his head, and his genial smile disappeared.

“ O, she is the most heedless, reckless girl, for

one in her state of health. In bed all the morning—the temperature of her room at 80. Driving this afternoon in a victoria and with no wrap on but a little fur-edged cape, just because she wanted to appear in her latest carriage dress—and to-night in a dinner gown with her arms and throat exposed. She will take a cold and be gone in a week—forever!”

“You can’t do anything with her. I gave it up long ago.”

“But you are her physician!”

“Goodness gracious, Elizabeth—a physician isn’t God!”

He plucked his sturdy, thick-set little figure upright. “A doctor can give advice and prescribe. He can’t force common-sense down people’s throats.”

“Do try and persuade her to be more careful.”

“Now that is what I call a truly feminine iteration. I explain the case to you, and then you mildly beg me to do exactly what I declare I can’t do. Hark! They are coming down.”

There was a stifled giggle on the stairs, then a hearty, rollicking, contagious, masculine laugh.

“There is an everlasting joke between those two,” said Dr. Brighteck, laughing also. “I declare I sometimes think they will laugh Ethel well. They are a perfect example of a happy marriage because of their perception of their own

mediocrity and their consequent good luck in having nothing expected of them but hospitality. I have told them exactly the same thing," he added, apologetically. "They don't mind themselves. It is only the house they might feel sensitive about."

Elizabeth went forward to the drawing-room. Ethel was already in the centre, her hands clasped over her husband's arm, her laughing face against his shoulder. She loosened her hold as Mrs. Candace and Dr. Brighteck advanced, drawing herself up with a pretty arrangement of her train.

"There, what do you think of this dress? I knew very well you would come over"—shaking her finger at the doctor—"when Angora told you we should be alone to-night. We are each much obliged to you, I'm sure. Stand aside, pussy, till dear Mrs. Elizabeth tells me what she thinks of my gown."

"I like the train and the color and the fit. It is most becoming. But aren't you cold?"

"Cold? No, indeed."

She arched her slender throat, around which was clasped a band of turquoises and pearls. Her fingers were crowded with rings.

"It is very neat, isn't it, Dr. Brighteck," and Theodore nodded complacently at the necklace. "Ethel's got a pretty throat, no mistake."

"I'd like to take her throat for granted on a

raw night like this. The gown and she are beautiful, as a matter of course, but I'm shivering this very minute."

"Dear, dear, what a sensitive plant you are. Theodore, tell Buxton to have more heat turned on. You still wear black silk, Mrs. Candace. It is rather severe, especially with the present gay fashions—but you always look well in it."

Mrs. Candace certainly appeared vastly Ethel's superior in a simply-made rich silk, whose long folds, unrelieved by lace or jet, swept the floor. A single diamond of rare beauty and unusual size fastened her gown at the throat, and but one ring—an emerald set in diamonds—called attention to her hands. People often said she made the frame less attractive than the picture on principle.

The portières were drawn and dinner announced.

"I'll be like Rosina Vokes in 'A Diamond in the Rough,'" said Ethel, as she inspected her oysters. "We are going to have a lot of good things for dinner to-night, and I hope, 'mi Lord,'" bowing to Dr. Brighteck, "you've an appetite accordin'."

"Terrapin, too!" glancing at her husband and laughing.

"Theodore dined once with people—I can't imagine who they could have been—but that's no

matter—and they asked him if he knew what it was when the terrapin was served. When he committed the awful mistake of naming the dish his hostess said anxiously—‘It’s very expensive.’”

“Couldn’t eat a mouthful of it, after that. I was afraid I was robbing them. I am sure they put their last cent in that terrapin.”

“Were they the Lorrièves of ‘Boston’?” asked Dr. Brighteck, imitating Mrs. Lorriève’s flat pronunciation inimitably—“the Lorrièves who live on ‘Chester Square’—‘A nice place’!”

“Are they down here?” Ethel’s eyes were as round as saucers. “Where are they stopping?”

“I am not sure they have alighted. They have been a half day in one of the cottages, two days at the Palmer House, and this afternoon they appeared at the ‘Laurel-in-the-Pines’. Mrs. Lorriève assured me as soon as I saw her that they had made good terms,—‘Farty-four dollars a week, two in a room,’ and that if one only knew how to manage, the chateau was as cheap as other places.”

“They must have one of those small inside dark rooms. They will burrow there nights, live in the corridors and parlors day-times, and cut a swell with driving and all that sort of thing,” said Mr. Grace to Dr. Brighteck.

“How did you ever happen to dine with the

Lorrièves, Theodore?" Mrs. Candace was looking into his pink, boyish face with perplexity and curiosity.

"I found myself there. It is about all I can say. Mrs. Lorriève could tell you. Heavens! what a terrible eye she has. She fixed me with it one day when I wanted to buy a piece of land of her husband. She held the deed—to get it I had to dine with her. I couldn't even look at terrapin for a year."

"Her daughter isn't so bad," said Dr. Brighteck contemplatively. "She looks happier than she did a year ago, too."

"Perhaps she is engaged," said Ethel, to whom this state was the threshold of perpetual happiness.

"I rather think she is," said the little doctor, "for Mrs. Lorriève told me they wanted to be where their 'frinds' could come, as her 'darter' expected company fer Sundays'."

"I shouldn't think such people could get in at the 'Laurel-in-the-Pines'," said Ethel. "The house has the reputation of being so ultra exclusive."

"Humph!" said Dr. Brighteck. "There is only one Lorriève in a century who could tolerate such a quiet place as the chateau. Mrs. Lorriève is always and everywhere on a campaign for acquaintances. She expects that simple-minded, vapid daughter to take and keep possession of the

territory she conquers. Her staff though is not equal to her generalship."

"Are they wealthy?" asked Ethel, prepared to be a little less aggressive if their fortune were immense.

"Wealthy!" exclaimed Theodore pompously. "There is no end to their riches. It started in a whisky-hole on Third Avenue—she 'tendin' the bar' while Mr. Lorriève went out to day's work as a carpenter. Then he or she gained a little influence and considerable money from the whisky. He became a contractor with political ambitions. First he was made alderman, then sat on the Public School board of New York—then he got his hand into the City contracts, then she made their liquor business a wholesale one, then they moved with one leap from rooms over their store to a house of their own on Madison Avenue, and finally, three years ago, not succeeding socially in New York, they moved to Boston, where I hear they are better received."

"How long ago *did* you dine with them, Angora?"

"O, three or four years ago."

"You haven't any business relations with them any longer, have you?"

"No."

"Then you need not know them, of course, if we should meet."

"I know them!" he roared. "She will know me till the end of time—and, take my word for it, dear, she will know you too before she leaves Lakewood, when she finds out we have a cottage here."

"She shall not," replied Ethel, with an angry flash in eye and voice.

"O, she will!" insisted the doctor cheerfully. "This is her second season here. She understands the field, and you may be sure the campaign will be brilliant."

"I think we shall get demoralized if we discuss the Lorrièves further," said Mrs. Candace with a smile which relegated them to polar regions socially. "What did you hear about the Continental, Theodore, in the City to-day? I have some money in that road, and I want to know whether to sell at 22 or hold on."

"Hold on!" exclaimed both men in chorus.

"Grace," said the doctor presently, "which is better property these days—little brains with much capital or large brains with small capital?"

"Capital and small brains. Farrington had brains enough to manage the Continental. You might as well try to scoop up the Atlantic though as to touch to-day any of the established monopolies. Of course there is no telling but that Farrington might have succeeded if he had

manipulated more cautiously, and hadn't tried to haul in Provincial stock."

"Have you ever read the history of the Italian Republics?" asked the doctor.

"Never had time. Read nothing but the papers. Take them all—'Sun,' 'Tribune,' 'Times,' 'World,' 'News,' 'Post,' 'Telegram,' 'Herald' and 'Press.' I keep abreast of the present on account of investments. I cleared five thousand to-day,—not much—but it was done so neatly that I take pride in it. It all came from reading the papers, too."

"You ought to read about those Italian Republics. They can teach us Americans a lesson or two. They read like a history of our own times, to quote from Justin McCarthy. A bandit steals a city, the people grumble. He gives them a cathedral; they applaud his generosity. Or, a peasant murders a score of nobles, seizes their palaces and treasures, and, as an atonement, marries the most beautiful of their women. Stealing and public munificence went hand in hand in those days. We would never have had Italian Art if we had not had Italian monopoly of land, city and democracy. The Pitti, the Uffizi, etc., are the splendid monuments of the downfall of the Italian Republics."

"Do read the matter up for me, Angora. It would be something new to talk about, too."

It does make me so tired to read anything solid," she added, with an impatient wrinkling of her pretty brow, "but more weary to see the men when I go up to the city mornings, each with a paper, and all looking as if they were finding their death-warrants."

"The terrapin!" said Dr. Brighteck, glancing at the plate the butler put before him.

Then they all laughed, and the conversation was diverted to stories of Maryland *bon vivants*.

CHAPTER X.

MR. KENT left his daughter and Miss Beadle delightfully situated at the "Lakewood." He remained over night to see them eligibly placed in the dining-room.

The next morning Millicent rose early to breakfast alone with him and have a last little tender farewell ; for she loved her father and felt proud of his reputation, being as full on her part as he was on his of material ambitions.

The point of dangerous possible issue between them was her romanticism which was lying fallow but tending on that account all the more surely to a rich harvest of contingencies counter to her primer of the science of life, while Mr. Kent's romanticism had its daily outlet in enterprises soaring in his imagination like cloud-capped palaces but often settling too upon a very solid base in materializing.

After the stage had departed down the sandy yellow avenue, and when the flutter of the daily morning exodus had subsided, the young girl hastened upstairs to Miss Beadle who had discreetly ordered breakfast served in her own room this morning.

There was nothing in her appearance or manner in the slightest degree ruffling. She was a wise old bird of passage whose plumage had long ago been reduced to thorough Bohemian-going properties. Time, moreover, had neither withered nor wizened her. She was overflowing with good-humor, affectionateness and cheerfulness. She was well connected and with sufficient means of her own to never need sacrifice her independence and to give herself also many a small luxury, which lent to her whole bearing and environment an air of becoming prosperity.

These alleviations of a solitary life had kept her well-balanced. She was not prim. She did not have that audacious self-confidence often noticeable in women who have breasted life for a long time unaided.

Many doors were open to her because she was philosophically content to take what was given with a fine air of apparent conviction that she was receiving the very best.

Millicent and she were excellent friends on that level so common between girls and middle-aged women. Millicent had an endless amount of chatter, and Miss Beadle untiring patience and sympathy.

"He's gone!" cried the young girl, bursting into the room. "I'm a desolate orphan!" And she put a dainty, lace-edged handkerchief to her

eyes with a laughable feint at crying. "Now let's make some plans."

Drawing a chair beside the breakfast-table and resting one foot upon a round, she clasped her knee with both hands. "You see we are thrust upon each other's cold mercies for a month or more and I think we had better have an understanding at the very beginning." She leaned over slightly, fixing her bright eyes on her companion. "Don't you?"

"Why, yes, certainly—if one is necessary. Don't you and I understand each other pretty well?"

"We have never been off alone together in this way," said Millicent, dubiously. "What directions did papa and mamma give you? We will say papa," she added with a little laugh, "for mamma thinks exactly as he does to an absurd degree."

"Why," said Miss Beadle, laughing contagiously, and clasping her hands while staring at the ceiling, "the usual ones, I suppose."

"O, I know. I'm not to flirt. As if I ever did! I'm not to sit up too late. I'm not to know anybody unless you give your Papal sanction."

"That is about it," and she smiled, while patting Millicent's cheek.

"What if I did wish to know some one of whom you did not approve?"

"We won't suppose such a possibility."

"But if I should."

"Then—but it couldn't happen," and she laughed between the words in a caressing way, "you would become conscious of your chaperon. You will not be so unkind, my dear, as to cause me the slightest anxiety."

"I do not foresee any temptation at present," said Millicent, brightly. "I have been looking over the register. There are lots of nice people here—but no one I care very much for. Do you know Mrs. Caruthers?"

"Mrs. Thomas Caruthers?"

"Yes; she is here."

Miss Beadle looked perplexed.

"Don't you like her?" asked Millicent quickly.

"O, yes—yes; very much indeed."

"What made you look so, then?"

"How did I look?"

"As if I had told you a disagreeable piece of news."

"I must have a tell-tale face."

"No, you haven't. But what your face says I can read like a book," said the young girl with youthful confidence. "Why are you sorry Mrs. Caruthers is here?"

"My dear, I haven't a thing in the world against Mrs. Caruthers. On the contrary, I consider her

charming—and extraordinarily beautiful. She wasn't at dinner last night."

"Yes, she was," said Millicent with animation. "I saw her leave the dining-room. You and papa were so busy talking, I hadn't a chance to point her out to you.—What if I should make up to Mrs. Caruthers—violently! What would you do?"

"Nothing."

"There is something on your mind."

"O, you are like all girls. You are making a mountain out of a mole-hill."

Miss Beadle got up, walked up and down the room two or three times and went to the window.—"Have you looked outside this morning?"

"Yes, I can tell you exactly how we face. This is the street that ends nowhere. That board-walk goes on down past the tennis court. Then if you go far enough you will come to a sand heap where the nurses and children sun themselves. Then if you face about you will observe across the street near where it ends in the woods such a desolate, desolate looking clearing with pines to the front of you, pines to the back of you—a dog kennel and barn to the left in the near background—chickens meandering up the front steps of a cottage in the middle of the clearing—a baby carriage every morning at about eleven in front of the cottage, and, at irregular

intervals, the whole length of the aforesaid board-walk, groups of women sauntering up and down apparently for exercise but really to see the daily procession of three start from the cottage—the baby, the nurse and the dog.”

“Do the Darlings live there?”

“Yes. And it is the saddest, dreariest, loneliest spot. If I did not happen to know many pleasant things about the Darlings, I should say it was a fit place to concoct revolutions, uproot parties, dismember coalitions—everything that is political.” And Millicent’s piquant nose puckered in disgust.

“When did you see all this?”

“Papa and I took a turn this morning. He wanted like every one else to have a look at the Darlington cottage. He says Mr. Darlington will never be elected again. I asked him why they were living in such a forlorn clearing in the woods then.”

“What did he say?”

“He said he supposed they were retrenching.”

“I don’t believe it. They are recuperating, not retrenching.”

“I should say you and papa meant exactly the same thing.”

“Do you want to see that baby so very much?” now asked Millicent.

"Yes, of course."

"Then let us walk down that way about noon, will you?"

"Very well. If we go, I must begin my letters right away."

"Why, you have just come."

"I have a very large correspondence," said Miss Beadle impressively.

Millicent felt mildly curious to know to whom she was in such haste to write. She seemed like such an unpossessed woman. But any close observer of her correspondence would have been filled with wonder and admiration to notice the minuteness with which she attended to every small epistolary propriety. It won and maintained for her a host of friends.

She had a faculty of expression, and there were family "In Memoriams" neatly bound in black, not a few of which, among "Letters from friends" contained some of her happiest efforts. This power to make small duties large was one of the secrets of her freedom from listlessness or despondency. It also nursed in her the comfortable feeling of a full life.

When Millicent came in from her own room, a couple of hours later, ready for their walk, she was astonished to see the neatly-assorted pile of letters directed, stamped and sealed.

"How busy you have been!"

Miss Beadle looked up with gratified complacency:

"I have hurried a little—but the rest can be held over—I think"—and she rested her cheek in her hand a second—"till to-morrow. Mrs. Fenwick, I notice by to-day's paper, has lost a connection, a second cousin on her father's side. I must send my card; but that can wait till to-morrow. The Granbys have written to know if I can thoroughly recommend 'The Larches in the Berkshires.' I couldn't get them in this morning. It is too bad. They wish to settle on a place for the summer immediately. Then I have been made an honorary member of the 'Ladies' Anti-Bacillæ Society,' a very praiseworthy organization. I appreciate the attention, and do not want to be remiss in my acknowledgment. But I'll put my things right away, dear."

"Shall I take the teeny-tointy ones?" asked Millicent, picking up the card envelopes and idly counting them.

"Yes, please do. There are six. Don't drop any."

"No," said the young girl, wondering if she should ever feel weighted with matters which certainly at present gave her little concern.

Miss Beadle, handsomely clad in a new seal cape and Paris tocque, gathered her remaining letters and the pair went down the hall with that

gay unconcern which can come to the idlest only when they have left their daily haunts and duties. Near the elevator they met Mrs. Caruthers.

Miss Beadle and she greeted each other cordially, even lingering for a short conversation, but, although there was ample opportunity, Millicent's chaperon did not introduce her.

"I call that real unkind in you, Miss Beadle," said Millicent, but with a thoroughly sweet-tempered smile. "I have been dying to know her for a year."

"I'll introduce you another time. I dare say we shall meet often."

"Why did you put it off?"

She felt sorry she had acted so cautiously, for thus far she had simply piqued her young friend's curiosity.

"Millicent dear," she said, expostulatingly, "how was I to know you were so very anxious to meet Mrs. Caruthers? I'll try and bring you together to-night."

"Could it be?—it couldn't possibly!" Millicent scouted the idea as silly, that Miss Beadle desired to keep her away from Mrs. Caruthers simply because Perth Edwards was related to that lady. This would indeed be carrying caution to an absurd limit.

When they came out of doors, they felt at once the exhilaration of the deliciously cool air and

clear skies, the stir of pedestrians and of those preparing to ride or drive.

They exchanged glances of sympathetic amusement as they turned down the North walk. The street stretched ahead of them in a stiff, unbroken line of vivid color. The pines on the right were brilliantly green in the high March sunlight. The beds of turf laid out in geometric precision in the half-sand enclosure by the northern side of the hotel were quite fresh as if the grass had already begun to grow. The cedars, laurels, and other ornamental shrubbery, were neatly trimmed. Everything wore the festive air of a perpetual Christmas-tide.

The brilliant equipages, the liveried coachmen and footmen, even the invalids and their attendants had a picturesqueness heightened by the sombre severity of the universal sand and pines.

They were soon lost among the constantly increasing groups moving up and down between the hotel and the woods. They had walked this distance three times. The third time, the baby carriage, till then invisible, was in front of the cottage.

"Let's go into the pines and wait. My feet ache," said Miss Beadle. "I guess we can find a log to sit down on."

"We might miss them."

"O, just for a little while. We won't go far in."

They found an obliging log a few rods in. They had sat but a minute when Millicent, who had kept her gaze steadily fixed on the procession, that now swelled, then ebbed, exclaimed: "I think they must have started."

"Pull me up," said Miss Beadle, wearily.

With youthful vigor Millicent hastily brought her to her feet.

They turned out of the woods.

"Just in time!" exclaimed the elder woman, ecstatically.

They reached the edge of the clearing to see the baby carriage propelled by a white-aproned, white-capped maid, a huge St. Bernard walking sturdily beside her.

As if an electric shock had gone the whole length of the board walk from the woods to the hotel, each group started to converge as nearly as possible to where the nurse, with her treasure, would probably reach the sidewalk. She was a very young, rosy-cheeked maid, who evidently enjoyed the situation. Occasionally she would obligingly stop, while girls and women peered under the canopy.

Miss Beadle and Millicent, unwilling to mingle with such a promiscuous bevy of baby-worshippers, tried to get a satisfactory glance on the wing. Their curiosity all at once conquered, for, just as they came opposite the group, the nurse again

halted, the St. Bernard faced the street solemnly, like a picket on guard, and the whole company of men, women and children paused.

The infant opened her eyes. They were as blue as the sky above her.

"Such a pitty, pitty ittle dir!" exclaimed a lady in a high key.

"With eyes just like your beautiful mother's!" cried a second in screaming tones, staring at the cottage, as if Mrs. Darlington might possibly hear her.

"You know you have a heavenly smile, you dear, you!" and a third pounced under the canopy and stole a kiss.

"You are the very image of both your father *and* your mother," now called out another in a tone of challenge.

"And she won't say a single little wee word to all these aunties and uncles here. Say a little word, please!" A half dozen heads bobbed down over the fair, good-natured baby face which suddenly broke into a broad smile.

"Oh!" in a smothered rhapsody from several women.

A tall Southerner, thin, snowy-haired and tremulous, pointed his long, bony finger to the cottage, and addressing the infant, exclaimed:

"Worthy descendant of your illustrious progenitor. If the combined forces of the Democrats

and Mugwumps—no laughing matter, sir,” he said in a deep aside to a rubicund man giggling spasmodically and repressedly—“worthy and youthful descendant, listen to an old man’s prophecy. Ere another year shall roll around in the sweep of the ages, your ardent and precocious gaze will be turned toward the White House.”

“’Es it sall. Oo sall go there, ’es oo sall! Oo, and your father and your mother——”

“Come, Millicent, come away,” said Miss Beadle, somewhat shamefacedly.

“Just let me steal a kiss.”

She dove under the canopy like a bee after honey, seized her kiss, and with flushed face joined her chaperon who was walking rapidly and with considerable severity of aspect.

“I had no idea that baby was quite such a rage. I wouldn’t have been caught in such a motley crowd as that if I had known——”

“O, I think it was the greatest fun. She’s a dear little thing—and I got a kiss!”

“Well, I think her mother is too good-natured. Fancy the kisses—the—the contagious kisses!”

“Mine didn’t hurt her, any way,” said Millicent, stoutly. “My, isn’t it hot!” and she opened her coat.

“Yes, oppressive. We had better go in and read till lunch.”

Millicent enjoyed Miss Beadle's harmless dissatisfaction with herself.

"Suppose we separate awhile," she said, with genuine girlish kindness; "or, if you don't object, I will stay out a little longer alone, and you can go in."

"Very well," acquiescently.

CHAPTER XI.

IN defense of her own integrity of purpose, Portia took her accustomed walk the next morning. She sat down on the log. The day was a forerunner of summer. Not a breath of air was stirring. A faint balsamic odor pervaded the atmosphere. The sky looked hazy and hot. The yellow sand felt warm underfoot.

She opened her book. She could not get interested in it. She laid it in her lap and began making small half circles in the sand with the toe of her boot. She became absorbed in seeing how many arcs she could describe, one within another. This made her think of the wheels of Elijah's chariot—then of miracles. Then her mind settled down heavily and springless upon the hard facts of life and the impossibility of anything miraculous occurring in the things, the scenes, the relations that are felt, tangible, vital to mere human present happiness. She believed in the miracles recorded in the Gospels, of course. She had been brought up to do so, and habit of belief was as strong, if not stronger, than habit of character. She was glad they continued to possess such a powerful

reality to her. When at church, and the rector chanced to be a good reader, with a reverent voice, she could still listen to the Bible with a childlike, spontaneous faith which subdued rebellious anxiety and gave her a feeling of kinship to the sparrows. She could observe how thickly feathered they were, how numerous, how hungry—always needy. Not one fell to the ground unnoticed. Not a hair of her abundant tresses was uncounted. Yes, she believed it; of course she believed it. She must believe it. But, oh, what was going to become of her next winter—two years from now! If only this Heavenly Father were—were anthropomorphic.

The tremendous word belittled the thought, and she smiled. She looked up.

It was as if the whole of nature were uttering a prayer of rejoicing. There was such a glad expectation everywhere, as if the earth had become the handmaiden of God and was uttering a hymn of thanksgiving kindred to the Magnificat of the Virgin Mary.

Portia prayed too, not audibly, not in language, but, as a deaf person might for hearing who has faintly caught the sound of a long absent, beloved voice.

Nothing was promised to the lonely girl. No angelic face flashed for a moment from the splendid ardor of the blue sky. But, as nature was

doing, so she had done—suddenly—beneficently, for her repose of soul. She had communed with God—and, after all, what had she to do with to-morrow?

Everything around her at once became very real. She was so real. She still felt young and with the courage of youth. The old warm imagination of years ago asserted itself.

There had been only three years of this tough encounter with life, and she had lived twenty-five. Everything could happen to her still. In these last three years, perception, analysis, humility and courage had developed; a general rearrangement of so many false equations, the very thought of which now seemed absurd to her, and which she saw most of her rich friends still hugging to their hearts, had taken place. She had become at least more womanly. After all, then, hers was not an utterly bad state of affairs.

There was a latent sparkle in her eye. A courageous independence curved her lips. A rigidity which made her sit unnecessarily upright penetrated her whole figure. If she had been ten years older and thin, she would have looked fierce and angular. Now there was a pathetic, resistant beauty about her, such as one sees in a wild flower growing on the edge of a cliff and blown to its full height by a steady gale sweeping from the gorge below.

She had forgotten Bryan Mallory, forgotten everybody in particular; she was in one of her magnificent moods when the whole past seemed a myth and she a solitary passenger in the universe, travelling from the unknown into the unknown.

And Bryan Mallory, sauntering with uncertain feelings, but no uncertain purpose, along that path towards which Portia's back was turned, hailed the first sight of her with something of the exhilaration which nature and the brooding upon the unseen had given her.

She heard the approaching footsteps at first vaguely, as if she were in a dream. At present it made no difference to her whose they were. Not that she said this to herself. She had not descended from her mood sufficiently for that.

When Bryan stopped in front of her, therefore, he encountered a pair of radiant, dreamy, gray eyes full of the blank unconsciousness of expression for which he was so famous.

He was afraid she meant to snub him. He relished the idea. No one had ever done it and he had often wondered how people who were snubbed felt.

But all at once a warm welcome shot into the splendid, staring eyes, a vivid color began to creep under the clear, olive skin, and Portia, holding out

her hand, said, rather irrelevantly :—" Oh, it is you."

He understood. It was so utterly refreshing to meet a woman to whom the very sight of him could convey for the time being no meaning that he played with the new sensation.

" Yes. Who did you think it was ?"

She laughed apologetically.

" I knew you weren't a tree—or—you did not make enough impression on me at first for me to recognize you."

" Indeed !" he pretended to be slightly offended.

" It would have been the same if you had been anybody else at just that moment," she said reassuringly. There was a barely perceptible minor quality in her voice as she continued : " I am alone so much, I am growing absent-minded. It is a dreadful habit. I try one day to break myself of it and the next, in sheer self-defence, I nurse it."

" You ought to force yourself to see more people."

She glanced at him briefly. Yes, she would say what she thought.

" I am fastidious about people."

" I thought you said you found them so interesting."

" I do, indeed, but from observation rather than

association. That gives one a chance to feel terribly lonely."

"Surely, though, since you care for them so much, you can find at least a half dozen congenial spirits here in Lakewood. Can't you?"

"If I were Mrs. Candace, I could."

She began to describe half circles in the sand again, her eyes intent on the occupation.

He had been so long accustomed to adroit approaches to his sympathy and affection that a momentary caution appeared in his eyes and manner.

"Why not as Miss Max?" he inquired.

"Because it is only those who can give a great deal of something else who can receive a little of what they want."

She looked up.

He perceived he was not much more than a blackboard to her on which she was making visible to her own mind her proposition. He felt utterly mean and common.

"I don't think it is always the case," he said, but irresolutely. "Do you mean that only people of great wealth like Mrs. Candace can absolutely choose their friends?"

"Hardly mere wealth," said Portia contemptuously. "Although," she added thoughtfully, "I do think it is very desirable."

He looked at her in surprise. Was she mercenary?

"I don't believe wealth is desirable," he said emphatically.

"It is convenient," replied Portia, with an air of conviction.

"Yes, yes," replied Bryan.

"Mrs. Candace has a great deal of everything. She has ever so much talent. I was a little girl in the same school where she was educated. There isn't anything she can't do. She is brilliant. And such a sweet heart! I hadn't seen her for several years till last evening, but I felt at once that in all those things which made her so very different from others she was unchanged. When a woman like her has wealth——"

"What then?" asked Bryan, with much curiosity.

"I consider it a lovely arrangement on the part of Providence."

"That is a happy way of putting it," he said laughing. "I consider Mrs. Candace very fortunate in having such a stout little champion."

"She doesn't need a champion," said Portia, but very gently, almost sadly. She did not envy what seemed Elizabeth's absolute freedom and independence. She would have been grieved to learn that one single item of luxury or opportunity had been removed from her former friend,

whom now she only claimed in her thought as an acquaintance, but the dreary, frightened loneliness and awful fear of the future that had loomed before her an hour ago swooped down upon her again with sudden force.

She rose to go. She was bidding good-bye to the old log in her heart too. She could not come there again. The undefined conventionalities of her breeding forbade it. She was sorry. She liked meeting Bryan Mallory in just such a spot. There they could come in mental and social touch in a thoroughly untrammelled manner.

He saw her fleeting, regretful good-bye look at the log, the sunny clearing, and the encircling trees. He felt still meaner. He must accompany her home whether she expected it or not. He was not willing to part with her so abruptly. So he rose too, and as she lifted her eyes and said "Good-morning," he replied nonchalantly, "I'll go part way with you."

"I live in a direction diametrically opposite to the walk back to your hotel."

"It doesn't make a bit of difference," said Bryan, cheerfully. "I walk several miles daily. You will confer a favor on me if you will allow me to enjoy your company a short distance."

She rather led the way. She conscientiously chose a short cut through the woods. She would not be the means of detaining him an instant. He

was probably sorry in his heart at this very moment that he found her interesting. She was thoroughly used to having people make spasmodic advances because they instinctively liked her, but she had ceased some time ago to invite these advances. She had too often felt afterwards as if she were a small boat, used for a brief season of pleasure, then cast upon the sands and forgotten.

Bryan expected her to entertain him. He looked down furtively at her, wanting to see her color heighten and desiring to be diverted with one of her aphorisms.

She walked steadily forward as if pursuing a trail.

"Are you getting absent-minded again?" He switched impatiently a young growth of pine impinging over the narrow path.

"No!" She looked up with some wonder and a faint smile. She was amused. She realized that, after all, he had his share of vanity and that she had unintentionally taxed it. The Max pride which she was perpetually disciplining now came to the front. "Why should women be forever entertaining men," she asked herself, "smiling at their inanities and laughing appreciatively whenever they try to be facetious?" Still, she did like this man—very much.

"Why don't you say something to me?" she

asked so pleasantly and naïvely that she surprised him into a stare of blank astonishment.

“Because I am so stupid, I suppose.”

“Well, then, let us enjoy being stupid together like old friends who are talked out for the present.”

“That would be being very intimate indeed,” he said gaily. “However, I’m agreed.”

“If you prefer, we might be old enemies trying to endure each other’s society until the first chance came to separate.”

“I like the first arrangement. Do not try to say another word. I am more than satisfied.”

The color now came into her cheeks and remained. She began to wonder if he would go all the way with her. Perhaps it would be better to let him see in what a shabby spot she was hibernating.

They came on Madison Avenue. As the morning was bright, there were many enjoying the air. Mr. Mallory was tipping his hat continually. Portia, too, occasionally met an acquaintance. She began to feel unpleasantly conspicuous. They passed Mrs. Caruthers whose face lighted with involuntary surprise as she saw them together. Miss Max began to unduly appreciate the advantage of obscurity.

Presently Miss Beadle and Millicent came in sight, Millicent looking immensely pretty in a

dark green tailor suit and a huge hat of the same color.

Miss Beadle bowed affably while inventorying Portia's shabby fur and last season's bonnet vainly freshened with an aigrette refusing to stand fiercely erect on a wrong shape.

Bryan enjoyed the situation immensely. If Miss Max were up to that sort of thing, he would have been glad to take this walk at this hour for a week of mornings.

He suspected he had met for the first time in his life a woman who would not give him a particle of gratuitous assistance. He respected but did not altogether enjoy, after all, her indifference. If she would only vary it a little, in spite of his assurances to himself to the contrary, with spasms of warmth, or faint efforts to "draw him out." He felt somewhat ashamed as this phrase exactly vocalized itself in his thoughts. He began to realize that the lazy assurance in which he had wrapped himself like a mantle for years had had a rent torn in it this morning. Figuratively speaking, he wiggled a little mentally and thought of his collection. However, his sensations like those of his grubs were still rudimentary, and it lay quite in his power to end them at any moment.

They turned off Madison Avenue into a narrow side street more irregular and less carefully in

order than most of the others. The cottages soon became smaller and plainer.

Portia now said half apologetically, but with a gentle kindness thoroughly disarming, "I am sure you must feel thoroughly tired, Mr. Mallory. Remember you have the return walk to take. I am several blocks from where I live still."

"I'm never tired," said Bryan, stoutly. "I shall stay out the entire morning. Do let me go to the end with you."

"I shall be delighted, of course, to have you."

"Then she hasn't any vulgar shame of her unfashionable quarters," said Bryan to himself, and again he readjusted the focus through which he was viewing her. "She simply wants to get rid of me. She shall not." He began to put a superfluous energy into his steps.

"Now you can see my house," said Portia, several minutes later, with animation. "That small green one with a steep gable in front and a square tower. There is a little room in the tower—and it is mine."

"It faces northwest. Don't you feel the winds very much?" inquired Bryan anxiously.

"They are pretty fierce some days. But at this season, you know, you think each cold snap is the last, and so when I am shivering I keep saying, 'Spring is coming.'"

"You have heat in that tower room, I hope."

"Yes," said Portia, laughing, "but I am either burning up or freezing: it is one extreme or the other. But I do have the most gorgeous sunsets. You recall how level and thick the pines are at the upper end of the lake. The sun sets right over their tops—and such skies! Sometimes they are Florentine—that deep, deep red like a crust of throbbing warmth. You have noticed the Florentine skies, haven't you? And then again they are Venetian—deep, ardent blue or pale, delicate green. Or, when there has been a wind and it is very cold and then grows suddenly still in the late afternoon, there are the orange effects, and the sun rests on the green trees a minute as if they were a lake, then plunges down into that yellow glow as if he must melt his coldness. There is one sky that is terrible," added the girl solemnly. "It is a pale, light, blue sky with drifts of lead-colored clouds. The sun is a dull red and casts a sickly hue on the sombre clouds; it looks like a great wicked bloodshot eye and I stare and stare at it and half try to propitiate it as if it were my evil genius. I assure you the tower room seems eerie and lonesome during such a sunset."

"Why do you look at it?" asked Bryan. "I always turn my back on anything I don't like."

"That is a man's way and a very good way too," replied Portia; "but you see a woman, if she

makes constant company of herself, has to have dramatic situations. An uncanny sunset plays the part of the 'The Ancient Mariner' to me."

"I thought you were a woman without a single foolish notion."

"I'm packed full of them," she said emphatically.

"I find them interesting as you give expression to them, at all events."

He said this so chivalrously, and there was such a steady, friendly glow in his honest, near-sighted eyes that she felt a quivering warmth.

"Here we are," she said, pausing, and then slipping on the other side of the half-open gate. She closed it as if unconsciously and faced Bryan standing on the other side.

She held out her hand over her barricade.

He took it, glanced at the house, then down at her—paused irresolutely, as if the words cost him an effort, and asked, "Don't you ever invite a fellow to call?"

"I literally have no place in which to receive one."

"I'd sit on the stairs."

"Would you be willing to sit in a room half full of lounging boarders who drank in every word you said while you and I talked a few commonplaces?"

"I'd like to try it."

She laughed outright. She glanced at him, then away, then faced him again.

"You may!" she said, but as if she felt sorry for him.

"Good-bye," he said, turning away. Looking back immediately after, he added, "I'll try it very soon with your permission."

She nodded assent, but with a deprecatory smile.

CHAPTER XII.

MISS BEADLE had great sympathy with the mere fact of life and contemplated dying as a remote calamity which it was wise to forget as soon as thought of. She therefore understood why people of every sort and condition cling to existence, and she moreover appreciated what all do not, the right of each to make as much out of his situation from his particular point of view as he can. She was keenly alive to the myriad feminine devices for making time pass—not to shorten life but to intensify its meaning. What every one did, how it was done, what the kaleidoscope effect was of the whole movement at the “Lakewood,” were her never-ending source of interest and instruction. She was an admirable companion for a young girl, for minute details absorbed her as profoundly as some great and magnificent generalization would a philosopher.

She became very thoughtful after they had passed Bryan Mallory and Portia.

Millicent wondered over the outcome of her revery.

Presently she said: "He must be stopping at the 'Laurel-in-the-Pines.' It is a pity he isn't at the 'Lakewood.' He is a very desirable young man for you to know—very!"

"It seems to me everybody nice is over at that hotel," said Millicent ruefully.

"O, no," said Miss Beadle positively. "The 'Lakewood' is the most popular, and it is always full."

"The 'Laurel-in-the-Pines' is the most exclusive."

"Would you like to walk down there and glance at the register?"

"Yes," replied Millicent eagerly.

So they continued their way down Madison Avenue and then along the pretty lake on which a boat or two was sailing against a stiff breeze that had a trace still of the rawness of March. After a short walk they climbed the bank near the shore and went through the woods, coming out in front of the hotel.

"How perfectly lovely!" exclaimed Millicent rapturously. "Just like a great French chateau. O, we must come over here for a week at least."

"Perhaps—before we leave."

They went in.

There was indeed a vast difference between the two houses. The smaller one had the merit of wide

sunny spaces, an atmosphere of leisure, elegance and reserve, while there was something charmingly homelike about the corridors and reading-room. The windows of the corridor facing on the south were built in shallow recesses in which during the mornings sat groups of ladies with their books or embroidery. Flanking the long straight side opposite the windows were thrifty foliage-plants giving an air of summer to the bright halls.

The two sight-seers walked everywhere about the first floor, resting a few minutes in the sumptuous yet dainty green-and-gold parlor and trying the great chairs before the fireplace in the reading-room where the provisions for lovers of current literature were surprisingly varied.

"It is ever so much nicer," whispered Millicent.

"I don't think so," whispered back Miss Beadle emphatically. "In the first place there are a thousand people at the other house and what you want to see is people not furniture."

"There are two or three hundred here, at all events."

"Oh, this is a good place to spend an entire winter. But the other is so gay—such music—such promenades—so much breadth and life in the office, evenings—such big bedrooms and big beds!"

"Such a great, great, great big dining-room,"

said Millicent tragically, and bending towards her chaperon with make-believe enthusiasm.

"Come look at the register. That will be the only thing to make you contented."

So they turned over the leaves, their heads together, and beginning back at the first of January in order to have the examination sufficiently exhaustive.

"Yes, he's here!" said Miss Beadle regretfully.

"Who? Mr. Mallory?"

"Yes—and Dr. Brighteck. It seems to be a great place for men."

"Now, you see!" exclaimed Millicent.

"Oh, here are the Dalrymples and Fennings. They are nuisances everywhere."

"Awfully funny to watch though," said Millicent. Suddenly she started back.

"Any one you know?"

"People I don't want to know. Those dreadful Lorrièves. Ugh!" and she gave a bear-like shake. "Let's go back. I won't say another word against the 'Lakewood.'"

"I thought you would be satisfied, after all," said Miss Beadle, with unnecessary feminine iteration of a previous conviction.

By evening of this second day they felt like old residents. They had walked through the principal streets in the morning, had taken one of the prescribed drives in the afternoon—their

respective rooms had assumed the air of each occupant, their wardrobes had been minutely and mutually examined for purposes of reciprocal approval as well as personal scrutiny. When it was time to light the gas they were discussing what each would better wear down to dinner.

"There's one comfort—we can dress more here than at a city hotel. I must say I like to show my clothes."

"Why, Millicent!"

"You would like to tell me that sounds vulgar. But it is the truth."

"Everybody, of course, takes pleasure in being thoroughly well-clad."

"Not simply clad, but dressed. There is a heap of difference between those two words."

"A true lady dresses purely for her own satisfaction."

"And that of others. I never feel supremely happy in a new gown till I have seen some other woman look at it approvingly. Then I know she thinks I look well in it, for if the wearer does not look well in a gown it has the effect of being ugly. To-night I am going to dress with a view to Mrs. Caruthers."

Miss Beadle put on her eye-glasses and stared at Millicent. "I think I am capable of telling you whether you are suitably gowned."

"That isn't the idea. All my dresses are made

for certain purposes and are suitable enough." She laughed a little. "I want to look fetching!—so as to attract her attention."

"You are daft on Mrs. Caruthers, dear. I'll lose no time in introducing you. So save your prettier dresses for special occasions."

The girl pounced down on the chaperon and hugged her—hugged her tighter and tighter till her corsets creaked and she grew very red in the face. Then Millicent kissed her.

"To-night?"

"Just as soon as I can—if you will only let me go."

"Don't you like being loved?"

"Yes—but—moderately! Please let me go!"

Millicent gave her another spasmodic kiss, a parting squeezing hug and suddenly relinquishing her, whisked out of the room.

"I am going to have my hands full, after all," said Miss Beadle ruefully to herself.

When they met a half hour later, the young girl appeared irresistibly pretty. Her waving, abundant dark hair had additional and unexpected twists. A dainty silver comb asserted itself piquantly, and her gown of some dark blue clinging stuff and fitting her like herself set off her clear complexion. Around her neck was a delicate gold chain from which hung in the slender white hollow of her round throat an antique portrait of an unknown (ancestor?) but

quaint enough to allow the setting of tiny diamonds.

"There!" she planted herself in front of Miss Beadle who stepped off a little, then walked around Millicent, giving her dress a touch or two.

"You look your very best," she said kindly.

"I'll do you credit to-night; at least I'll try to. I hope you are not worrying about me. I am conventional enough, on the outside. It would be simply impossible for papa's daughter to do anything unworldly or ridiculous. Still I like a good time, and I know when I like people," she added, as if her thought or emotion after all rested on some basis of which she did not feel altogether sure.

"The doors have been open some time. One gets a better dinner by going down early. Suppose we dine immediately."

"Wait ten minutes longer. It is so nice to walk in when there are lots of people seated. Don't you think so?"

"I used to—and I appreciate what you mean." She sank good-naturedly into an arm-chair.

When they issued from the elevator, a quarter of an hour later, the cheerful "office" was crowded with men and handsomely-dressed women. The dining-room which opened from this great central hall was already nearly full and it was with supreme satisfaction that Millicent

walked down its spacious centre beside Miss Beadle, looking very modest and beautiful but observant of every one on the right and left from under her drooping lashes.

They had a small table in the main hall next the glass partition dividing it from the dining-room in the wing.

Miss Beadle took the seat facing opposite the entrance and commanding half the wing. Millicent sat on the other side. Looking forward through the glass partition, over the tables her view afforded, she saw a short distance away, but quite behind her chaperon's vision, Mrs. Caruthers and Perth Edwards.

The young girl caught her breath. A hot dizziness suffused her head, and when it passed her ears were ringing. But her color suddenly heightened, her whole manner softened.

Perth's head was turned away for he was giving the waiter an order.

It was a long time before she dared allow herself the luxury of another view. When at length she did so, it was to meet his admiring gaze and to notice a half smile of recognition in Mrs. Caruthers' eyes—that look, in fact, which is so propitiatory and inviting in a lady's face when she desires to make an acquaintance.

Millicent bowed a little stiffly, very girlishly, and looked bewilderingly sweet.

"Whom do you see?" quickly asked Miss Beadle.

"Some people from New York," said the young girl, carelessly.

Miss Beadle would not have turned her head for the world. At this moment, moreover, she discovered friends of her own sitting down at a table near by. She was at once diverted.

Thus, to Millicent's delight, matters were left to take their course. She did everything to prolong the dinner. She wanted to outsit Mrs. Caruthers. She wanted to have Perth pass her in going out of the dining-room and perhaps stop to speak to her.

So she ordered every course, as if she had the insatiable appetite of a gourmand, her chaperon looking aghast at the variety she at least contrived to taste.

Her little plan was at length rewarded. She saw Mrs. Caruthers leading the way to a door just back of Miss Beadle. Then she saw Perth say something—and then they turned towards her.

Her head was lifted, her whole face radiant with smiles and color, her eyes were flashing a thousand welcomes as they came up.

While Mrs. Caruthers paused to greet Miss Beadle, Millicent turned delightedly and held out her hand to Perth.

"What a perfect surprise!" she exclaimed.

"As great a one to me. I will tell you all about it after we leave the dining-room. But first let me introduce you to my cousin. She says she has never met you," and Perth, just as Miss Beadle had the words on her lips, said, "Miss Kent, Mrs. Caruthers."

"I am so glad of this opportunity. I had it on my mind to ask Miss Beadle the very first time I met her again to make me acquainted with you."

"I have been begging for the same privilege, haven't I, Miss Beadle?" and Millicent rose, receiving the introduction with empressement.

Miss Beadle was exceedingly annoyed. The whole affair had been so completely taken out of her hands.

Millicent remained standing.

As Miss Beadle was in the very act of laving her fingers in the perfumed water of her finger-bowl when Mrs. Caruthers paused, nothing remained for her to do but to rise also.

So Perth and Millicent walked out together, the older ladies following.

When they reached the main hall, Perth said a trifle pugnaciously, "I am going to exchange Cousin Alice with you for Miss Kent for a few minutes if you have no objections, Miss Beadle."

"O, we old people shall be delighted to seize

that vacant settee beside the fireplace for a comfortable chat, shall we not?" said Mrs. Caruthers quickly.

Miss Beadle gave assent smilingly and diplomatically, but with dismay in her heart.

The young pair joined the throng of promenaders in the corridors and soon drifted into the parlors and through them to the solarium where the band was playing and the plants emitting a delicious fragrance. The colored lanterns lent illusiveness.

Millicent suddenly felt reserved and shy. One of those waves of opposite feeling which made her real nature like the bosom of a mountain lake swept over her and she wished herself beside her chaperon.

Perth was conscious of the change. "The same contradictoriness," he thought, "that passed over her the last time we parted. I'll pounce into it and end it."

"What is the matter, Millicent?" he asked, solicitously.

"Noth-ing—don't you think it is a little cool here?"

"Cool! I'm hot."

She really shivered.

"We will go and sit down in this end parlor, he said, glancing through the long window. "There isn't a soul in it," he added gleefully.

She shrugged her shoulders.

He looked at her with a gathering frown. Ten minutes before she had been so overwhelmingly glad to see him.

She glanced at him, saw the deep cut between his thick eyebrows, noticed his eyes, affectionate, puzzled and angry at once, and then, as quickly as the sun goes under a cloud and comes out again, her face wreathed with acquiescent smiles as he found a divan at one side from which they could view the corridor.

The real nature of the girl had come uppermost. "What if I do like Perth Edwards? Haven't I a right to? What if papa would be vexed if he could see me at this minute? I'm not doing anything wrong." Thus were her thoughts fighting the battle between family expectations as yet pleasantly vague but magnificent, and youthful sentiment and fancy.

"You are going to see a lot of me, Millicent," and then he rehearsed Mr. Caruthers' plan.

"It is delightful, I am sure," she said a little tentatively. After a pause, she added: "You know I am very much chaperoned."

"I don't care for that. Alice can manage Miss Beadle every single time."

"No, she can't," replied Millicent, very positively. "She did to-night, because Miss Beadle was taken so perfectly by surprise. I am afraid,

though, you will never, never see me alone again in this hotel after to-night."

"Then it will be entirely your fault," he said, sagaciously. "You have always been fertile enough in expedients in the past, and if we cannot just be friends down here, too——"

She looked up very haughtily and a little hurt.

"Just friends," was his idea, was it? Then he should see Miss Beadle everywhere with her, morning, noon and night. A wave of hot, mortified vanity and growing love made her sit further away on the divan. She sat very straight and looked stylish and petulant.

"You are glad I came, aren't you?" he inquired, so anxiously, that if she had not been blinded by her own chaotic feelings she would at once have regained her serene and youthful complacency.

"Of course I'm glad. Why not? I have felt so cut off from our set ever since I came. I have been homesick for New York."

"She takes such awful care to be impersonal," said Perth to himself. "I don't believe there is a girl living who knows what she wants or whom she likes two minutes in succession," and with fervor equal to hers he vowed to become a misogynist. But he asked very propitiatorily, "Would you like to walk awhile? "

"Yes," said Millicent, rising immediately, as if

greatly relieved, but so disappointed that the tears came.

If he could have seen those tears, the evening might have ended differently.

They swelled and swelled till she was so choked she could not speak, and Perth, mistaking her silence, decided before they had gone half the length of the promenade to deliver her at his very first opportunity into the keeping of her redoubtable chaperon.

When they reached the office, therefore, he led the way to the two ladies, both of whom looked at the young people eagerly, though with very different reasons.

"Back so soon?" said Mrs. Caruthers.

Miss Beadle drew a chair invitingly near her own for her charge.

Perth lingered a few minutes, chatting coldly and brightly, and then addressing his cousin rather pointedly and saying, "I'll look you up a half hour later, Alice," he bowed good-night to the other ladies.

CHAPTER XIII.

DETERMINED to avoid even the sight of Millicent, Perth took an earlier train than usual to the city the next morning. He had said nothing further about her the evening before to Mrs. Caruthers who had too much tact to touch upon the difference which had sprung up between the young people so suddenly. Carrying much wounded pride and constantly increasing obstinacy with him to New York, he returned in the evening as doggedly resolute as ever to keep out of Millicent's way.

In spite of Miss Beadle's persuasive advice, Millicent put on her prettiest gown that night, going downstairs to the "office" long before it was time for the stages.

When she heard them drive up and witnessed the usual commotion of arriving and receiving friends, she felt suddenly frightened. She sat down as far from the entrance as possible, a bright color in her cheeks. Her eyes were bashful and ardent.

She watched the arrivals surge in, most of them welcomed, a few solitary and solemn-looking, and

others glancing about eagerly with the naïve curiosity still so evident in Americans when they are having a first experience. The crowd filled the office.

Presently only an occasional traveller pushed the fan-doors open. As yet Perth had not appeared. All at once, however, she saw his face through the glass-doors. It showed no eager expectancy.

He stalked in, looking neither to the right nor left and going straight to the desk to speak to the clerk. Perhaps he was going to give up his room. She trembled at the thought.

In another minute he was in the elevator. She saw it ascending with feelings of modest relief and keen chagrin.

Five minutes later she swept into her own room, turned the key between it and Miss Beadle's, and throwing herself on the bed burst into tears. She cried herself into a sick headache and was unable to go down to dinner.

By dinner-time, now that he was actually under the same roof with her, Perth was consumed with the desire of seeing her again. When he looked over at her table to discover Miss Beadle dining alone every sort of fear seized him, and Alice Caruthers found herself amused and pitiful at once.

"Have you seen anything of her to-day,

Alice?" he asked, pushing the soup aside after tasting it.

"Whom, Perth?"

"Miss Kent."

"Oh, yes."

"Did you talk with her at all?"

"No."

"Come, Alice, tell me what I want to know without questions."

Mrs. Caruthers' lipstwitched slightly; a sparkle glimmered and faded in her eyes. She played with her spoon, looking over at Miss Beadle.

"Well, Perth, wherever and whenever I have seen her, it has been behind the intrenchments."

"Do you mean Miss Beadle?"

"Yes. She is thoroughly fortified. The only thing for you to do is to follow suit."

"I don't understand."

"You will have to get a chaperon."

"Alice!"

"Yes;" she shook her head slowly but convincingly.

"Everybody would think me a fool."

"Never stop for everybody when you want some particular body."

"I'll not make myself ridiculous for any woman living."

"It is the only way to do, occasionally," she said, laughing. "Tom was the greatest kind of

a simpleton before I could let myself dream he really cared for me. But eat your dinner now, and when we are alone in my parlor, we will plan your campaign."

His appetite revived. He soon began to talk of the day's events. When he passed Miss Beadle on his way out, who looked up complacently from her salad, he bowed indifferently but cordially, leaving her with the impression that it was quite unnecessary to be so much on her guard.

On going up from dinner she found Millicent bent in a heap over a wood-fire which the child kept poking from time to time to make the sparks fly out.

She looked up presently with a pitiful little smile of welcome.

"Is anything troubling you, dear?"

"N-o. I guess I am homesick."

"Homesick! Why, why! Yesterday you were in love with Lakewood."

"I'm not to-day. I hate it. I wish I were on the 'City of Paris' this very minute with papa and mamma."

"Something unpleasant has happened. Please tell me what it is."

"What could happen! I'm headachy because I am homesick, and I am homesick because this is a dull, flat, stupid place, all pines and sand. It

is horrid—perfectly horrid down here—and as for the hotel——”

“Shall we go over to the ‘Laurel-in-the-Pines’?”

“N-o”—with a touch of eager dissent in her voice.

“It was dreary in the dining-room without you, dear. You ought to have a little pity for me.”

“Didn’t you see anybody down there whom we know—new people, I mean.”

She shook her head.

After a while Millicent ventured to ask, “Did you speak to anybody?”

“Yes,” said Miss Beadle, recalling Perth’s manner. “I spoke to Mr. Edwards and Mrs. Caruthers. They seemed rather indifferent. Do you suppose Mrs. Caruthers is snobbish. I never heard she was or saw anything to indicate it. Of course with a young fellow like her cousin, one understands that sort of thing. Dear me, I know all about the Caruthers and Edwards. The Caruthers have money without family, and the Edwards have family without money. Either condition is as bad as being lame in one foot.”

Millicent tossed her head. She gave the fire a savage poke. Presently she sat back, much flushed and very pretty in her dark maroon wrapper. “If I had to choose,” she said with determination, “I would select family any day.”

"My dear, you don't know anything about it," said Miss Beadle somewhat mournfully and turning an ugly but ancient ring on her finger. "Family won't feed and clothe you. Family won't take you to Alaska and Egypt. Family won't furnish your house and help you give dinners and keep in the swim."

"I am thinking of Mrs. Candace."

"Mrs. Candace is all very well. But who would ever say a word about her family except the 'Daughters of the Revolution' if she hadn't an immense fortune. Once I thought as you do. I have changed my mind. I have family enough for three ordinary New Yorkers with fortunes, but it doesn't help in these days."

"You wouldn't be a Lorriève, would you?" asked Millicent with inexpressible scorn.

"I dare say Mrs. Lorriève's grandchildren will lead society."

"H'm!"

"And Perth Edwards' descendants, if he hasn't money, will be the salaried employés of the Lorrièves."

"That will never happen, never!" said the young girl, sitting upright and clutching the arms of her chair. "He is just the kind of man to make a fortune and marry somebody with the bluest kind of blue blood. He's awfully aristocratic. You don't know him, Miss Beadle—and

—and I may as well tell you—I've got to tell somebody—I'm mad at him! Yes—just mad! He was so dreadfully afraid I'd think his attentions too marked, last night. I am not that sort of person."

"What did he do?"

"Do? He didn't do anything."

"Did he say anything?"

"Yes, he did. He tried to make it so very clear to me that he and I were friends. As if I couldn't understand! Oh!" She seized the poker again and gave the logs such a thrust that they fell apart; the blaze flickered; a shower of sparks flew up the chimney.

"I wouldn't care what he thinks or doesn't think."

"I don't." She laughed hilariously. "I shall keep out of his way after this, that is all. And if you see him coming around, or going to speak to me—or—or wanting to talk with me, don't you ever—ever leave us alone together a single minute."

"I'll take care of you, dear," replied Miss Beadle, soothingly, delighted that matters were unexpectedly assuming a course which would completely relieve her of the apprehension she had felt the evening before. "Only don't lay such stress on the Edwards' family connections. They are a declining family. In fact they have declined.

Yours is a rising family. Your father is making a name."

"He doesn't know who his grandfather was."

"No matter. Your father *is*. You live under a Democracy. If I were you I would take a bath and go to bed. You will have a nice long evening to get your beauty sleep in."

"I believe I will. I am tired out."

"I am tired, too. If I say good-night now, will you go right to bed?"

"Yes, I will." She held up her face for a kiss. Even Miss Beadle's caresses this night were far from unwelcome.

Meanwhile, in front of a fire equally cheerful, and which Mrs. Caruthers fed from time to time with pine-cones that snapped and flared with fatty flames, filling the room with a delightful resinous fragrance, Perth Edwards sat, airily smoking a cigarette and looking at his cousin with laughing incredulity, while she reiterated the necessity of his having a chaperon.

"Very well. Let us take such a fellow for granted, for the sake of the argument. But tell me though where I could find him."

"He is here—in this very hotel," said Alice impressively.

"H'm! Who is he?" Perth sat upright in stiff astonishment, a hand on either knee.

"He would enjoy the rôle beyond all words to express his delight," she continued.

"He would be called a fool."

"O, he would, of course, have to be called one and considered one, too—at least by Miss Beadle and her charge. He would like it. The more fool they thought him, the better he would play his part."

"I never gave you credit, Alice, for even the ability to scheme. I thought you a thoroughly frank, upright, literal woman. I feel sorry for Millicent already and ashamed for myself."

"If you won't promise to play your part thoroughly, I will throw the whole thing up," she said. "As for scheming, I can do it as well as anybody else, and always could, but never would except on occasions. This I consider an occasion. If you will follow my advice, you will come through the affair in triumph. Not that I consider it desirable for you to ally yourself with the Kents. They are frightfully new people; but then Mr. Kent has succeeded, Millicent is most attractive—and you love her. I loved Tom."

He held out his hand. She squeezed it soothingly.

A delicious silence ensued. Finally he looked up. "Go ahead, Alice. You are a woman and must understand a girl like Millicent. Poor little thing. I believe she does care for me."

"Care for you!" Alice compressed her mobile lips. "I saw with one glance how much she cared for you."

"Who is to be the chaperon?"

"Dick Gordon."

"I declare! I believe he would like it out of sheer deviltry. Then he looks so innocent and stupid—as if he had nervous prostration or some other queer complaint peculiar to genius and mediocrity. But you must not do or say anything to make him think lightly of Millicent."

"As if I would!"

"I'll write a message this minute asking him to come up here, shall I?"

She opened her desk. Perth soon despatched the note.

In a few minutes Mr. Gordon knocked. He came in effusively and familiarly.

Alice led him to a seat before the fire.

He was a slight man of middle age with a nervous, restless manner. His small black eyes were never still. His ugly, mottled complexion, his conciliatory manner, and a smile which was forever beginning and forever vanishing, completed the general traits of a physiognomy at once prepossessing and repulsive.

"Something on the carpet?" he asked, in a halting staccato.

"Fun and intrigue," replied Perth grandiloquently.

"Romance and youth," added Alice impressively.

"Delighted."

"Do you know what a chaperon is, Mr. Gordon?" she asked with soft animation.

"I should think so. I have often fancied myself playing such a rôle. Think I'd succeed? It is this way. You are forever a shadow—ha, ha! Ever read *Peter Schlemiel*? The person chaperoned is exactly like that innocent goose. He or she never knows the full value of a shadow till it is lost. If it is once disposed of or lost, all sorts of terrible consequences will ensue. Peter Schlemiel's shadow was his most valuable possession, but he did not know it, and to his everlasting sorrow bartered it away. It was worth more than the vast fortune he got in exchange. It was in fact his fortune. For want of it he lost the girl he loved. Why, a clever chaperon can make society call deformity style, ugliness beauty, stupidity innocence, and contrariness light spirits. If the men would have chaperons, they could win the women they wanted every single time."

"Capital!" exclaimed Alice, wringing her hands in apparent ecstasy.

"Mr. Gordon," said Perth solemnly, "I am of the same mind. I am convinced my destiny

hangs on securing the proper chaperon. Mrs. Caruthers has advised me to offer you this proud position."

"You young dog, you." Dick swelled with assumed anger.

"It is a tribute to your diplomacy," said Alice, between smothered gasps of laughter. "You will make Cousin your debtor for life. It will pass away your time while you are quarantined here for convalescence."

"I know half the world already believes me a fool," mused Dick, optimistically.

"And the other half knows you succeed in everything you undertake," added Alice enthusiastically.

He glanced at her with evanescent appreciation. Turning to Perth, he inquired,

"Have you come into a fortune?"

"No."

"Is your mind unbalanced?"

"I was never sane."

"Are you the victim of some suicidal propensity?"

"I love life too well."

"Anybody lying in wait to assassinate you?"

"I haven't an enemy in the world."

"What on earth am I to guard you against, then?"

"You are to defend me from the attentions

of a delicately-bred, highly-sensitive, enormously wealthy and exceedingly reticent young woman who would rather die than appear to court the best man living."

"I see ! I see !"

He got up and paced the floor as if trying the steps of the Virginia reel.

"I'll shadow you," he said, finally, "till you seem like the most important man in the United States. No one shall say a word to you without my appearing to weigh its hidden as well as obvious import. This retiring maid never shall have five minutes conversation with you without my presence upon the scene. As you rise in the scale of defended innocence, propriety and beauty, she by contrast shall sink into timid insignificance."

"She has a chaperon, too," said Perth.

"And you, while doing this for Perth, must manage to make it appear incidental, otherwise it will degenerate into a farce," added Alice, anxiously.

"It is this way, Mr. Gordon," she continued. "I have planned it all out, although I dare say your genius comprehends the situation at a glance. You are gradually to impress the young lady by your attentions to Perth with a profound sense of his importance. When this victory is achieved you are to lay siege to her

chaperon, thus affording the young people a chance to bring their drama to a happy conclusion."

"In other words, you expect me to storm the ancient citadel of Miss? ——"

"Miss Beadle is her name."

"You don't say so!" His countenance fell. A brick-colored flush suffused it. "Well," he said, thoughtfully, a minute later, "I believe I am equal to both parts of the programme. When shall we begin?"

"To-morrow night," said Alice. "Perth goes into the city every morning, so, except over Sundays, the whole affair must be managed evenings."

"I am glad it is not an all-day business," said Dick, cheerfully. "I can stand a run of comedy a month or so without its palling, provided I have a change of thought through the day. By the way, who is the young lady?"

"Miss Millicent Kent," said Perth, with lingering pride over the name.

"H'm! Is Miss Beadle chaperoning her?"

"Yes. You seem surprised."

"I am, rather. Bah, if Miss Beadle undertook to chaperon, she would do it—do it as well as I could."

"Are you acquainted with Miss Beadle?" asked Alice with a pang of disappointment. "It

will all fall through if you are. I thought you were a perfect stranger in the East."

"I am, to all intents and purposes. I happened to know Miss Kent's father on the Pacific Coast twenty-five years ago. Employed him then, in fact, at day's wages; but that's no matter. He is a solid Wall Street fact to-day. Miss Beadle I knew twenty years ago—casually; but I could have lost my reason and a score of other things since then. My identity for present purposes is sufficiently vague. I'll prove a first-class chap-eron, never fear."

"Then all is arranged till to-morrow night," said Alice, radiantly. "Will you have a hand at whist with us, Mr. Gordon? Fetch the cards, Perth, and draw the table near the fire."

CHAPTER XIV.

IT was the day of Ethel's dinner-party.

The weather during the early afternoon had been uncertain. Later, the temperature rose, the air thickened, a few drops fell sporadically. Gradually a slow, monotonous, fine rain set in, accompanied by a thick, depressing fog.

A tall hemlock outside Portia's window, which in the sunshine looked sturdy and luxuriant, became as gloomy as a cypress in the dull, waning light.

The open register sent out a stream of murky air, neither cold nor hot, but charged with cellar smells. What daylight there was lingered in the tower room, bringing out the white walls in chilling relief.

Portia had completed her toilet for the dinner. She had also ordered a carriage with a thrilling sense of increased expense and an inadequate purse. She had sat down in the one easy-chair her room afforded, a grim-looking but comfortable shaker rocker. The rocker was as large as a piazza chair. It had a broad flat arm for supporting a book.

Her slender hand lay extended on this arm, and in the chilly atmosphere it looked whiter and thinner than usual.

She rocked slowly back and forth, her eyes fixed on a series of Egyptian views she had been tempted to buy while in an extravagant frame of mind. The pictures aroused a train of fleeting sentiment and fancy.

Two sphinxes with a desert background were majestic still in their crumbling decay under the implacable finger of time. There was a vast pylon with the massive temple to which it was the entrance stretching away in a long row of thick, squat columns, between which were dimly visible the huge walls of those chambers sacred to the theosophic cult of Egypt's most aristocratic caste. The only beauty in the vast remains was that of grandeur and antiquity. The only lesson they served to teach was the lesson of instability and ruin.

She looked next on the towering but broken walls of the Ramesseum. The huge statues at their base were nearly gone. The sky looked down on the sand between those walls. They were no more to-day than "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," thus returning to the same destiny they might have served if left unhewn where God had placed them.

Thus did everything, however transported or

changed, eventually return to a primitive condition or service. All greatness, all usefulness under fixed forms was evanescent.

By an idle but logical transition, her thought reverted to the stone walls enclosing New England farms, ornamental now, being no longer necessary for clearing and demarkation.

The grim and august monuments of Egypt, the homely and extensive farm walls of New England are chiefly indicative to-day of endless labor and God-like patience. The first represent the climax of a slowly-elaborated civilization; they are the cenotaph of a vanished people. The others represent the evolution of a new people; they are already but an historic expression of its infancy. Yet how many men, how many backaches and heartaches, how many hopes and how many disappointments, how many possessions fallen into hands of strangers these stone monuments express!

"What is the use?" Portia vaguely sighed. "I wish I had the will to sit still till there was no more known of me than of those sphinxes."

But at this moment the door-bell rang with a loud clang. It was a bell inordinately proportioned to the size of the house.

She peered out of the window through the rapidly-gathering clouds.

"Yes, that must be my carriage," she thought.

The rain made the top appear like a shining strip of gutta percha. The driver, in his rubber waterproof, looked like a huge turtle thrusting out its head. The horses were as wet and as sleek as seals. It was an awful night to go anywhere.

"Why does it always rain whenever I have an engagement?" the girl wondered while slipping on her tips and throwing a circular around her shoulders.

"I don't want to go," she sighed to herself, hurrying along the unlighted hall and down the darker stairs. "It is so lonesome prowling about unattended or unaccompanied."

But once inside the carriage and enjoying the rapid roll of the wheels over the sandy, well-made drives, her eerie impression of antiquity and instability vanished and Lakewood, in its modern thrift and beauty, became an immediate and fatal environment not to be resisted.

She was the last guest to arrive, and she had only just descended to the drawing-room and received Ethel's greetings, when dinner was announced.

The table was an oblong one.

Portia was pleased with her seat in all respects, for she was between Mr. Grace and Dr. Brighteck and opposite Bryan Mallory. She was keenly delighted to meet Mr. Mallory under perfectly favorable conditions.

As for Bryan, the sight of the black dress with its small red spots gave him a thrill which made him feel almost foolishly exuberant.

Mrs. Candace was diagonally opposite Portia and vis-à-vis to Mr. Darlington. Every one seemed to expect either scintillations in the way of conversation between Elizabeth and Mr. Darlington, or at least familiar allusions to topics of cabinet importance, for it was generally accepted that men rose to their highest mental level in her company.

Mr. Grace's florid face shone like a generous reflector with the pleasure he always experienced in entertaining, while Ethel, with an artistic appreciation of scenic effects, congratulated herself on her happy thought in placing Mrs. Caruthers and Mrs. Darlington on opposite sides at the centre, and where their blonde and brunette beauty lent a harmonic color tone to the small company.

As for Perth Edwards, truth compels me to state that he was young enough and volatile enough, while dashing a thought or two toward Millicent as incomparably the superior of any of the women present, to nevertheless feel perfectly happy and thoroughly at home between Mrs. Darlington and Mrs. Candace. "The man of destiny" glanced towards Perth occasionally, as though wishing to interrupt the intensity with which his youthful acolyte studied him even as a

gourmet. Indeed, several times the young man's manner was alarmingly like that of a reporter.

"Why is it, Mr. Darlington, that shortly after a man becomes President of the United States we read of him as a regular Isaac Walton?" asked Ethel, while the fish was served.

"Possibly because fishing is a thoroughly vacuous amusement, and thus leaves the presidential mind free to ponder weighty matters."

"Then the Chesapeake and Hog Island are responsible for new aspects of the silver question, reform in the tariff, and reduction of the pension lists?" inquired Elizabeth. "There should be a subsidy granted by Congress for piscatorial purposes, with a view to hastening political reforms."

Mr. Darlington lifted his heavy lids, and the folds of flesh about his cheeks settled into his neck as he replied:

"As paradoxical as it sounds, a true democracy, developed harmoniously and on a grand scale, will require larger instead of smaller expenditure. The popular delusion in this country among all parties is the delusion of cheapness. As a people, we still lack all sense of proportion."

He paused as if for breath and thought. Dr. Brighteck, as agile in mind as body, leaned over and said:

"As I understand you, an important plank in a democratic platform is not the saving of the peo-

ple's money, but the right appropriation of that money."

"Precisely! the pension list, for instance, should be cut down, not because there is too little money, but because there are—there are pensioners who are not pensioners. It is giving money to a myth. Economically, therefore, the size of the appropriation is a scandal, a scandal to the financiering of the Government. Reverting, however, to what Mrs. Candace said, the voting of a subsidy for piscatorial purposes, I do not find the idea irrelevant, not at all irrelevant. Anything conducing to the relaxation of a mind belonging to the public, whatever the cost, is a gain to the nation. I would therefore have the revenue yacht *Dolphin* used more freely than it is. I would have it refitted frequently and superbly, both as an index of the use to which it is put, and as a manifestation of the completeness with which anything, however remotely related to the administration, is conducted."

"It is delightful to be able to talk *ex-officio*, isn't it?" said Mrs. Darlington, after a pause which no one else seemed inclined to break, although there was a keen light in Bryan Mallory's usually indolent eyes, as if his thoughts were busy on opposing lines. "There are so many things ripe for a change," she continued, "and neither party is quite willing to incur the opprobrium of making

innovations. The women of the country would not hesitate to make them and take the consequences, which, I am sure, though, would be beneficial, no matter what the newspapers say; but men, whether as individuals or parties, are so afraid of being talked about."

"Yes," said Ethel, airily, "it is timidity that kills most men who die before their time. Don't do much thinking, Angora, and above all things do not be an innovator if you wish to live to a green old age."

"The conservation of force has been my motto and always will be, if I have wit enough to stick to my text," said Mr. Grace, in a puffing, gustatory voice, as the pink mottled his face till it looked like the palm of a plump, fair hand.

"As one source towards which the revenue should be directed, Mr. Darlington," asked Elizabeth, "do you not think the requirements sufficient for larger expenditures at Washington for social functions? Should there not be a summer White House as well as a winter one? Victoria has Balmoral, Windsor and Osborne House. Should not the residence of our chief dignitary be a more crystallized affair? I would even go farther, and add that our ex-presidents should have houses built at the expense of the Government, and an income for life, so that as private citizens they can adequately support the dignity

to which they become accustomed. Social life at Washington should be greatly elaborated, and not based on precedent, as established now by one party, then by another. Congress should formulate a set of rules to which official society at the capital would be required to conform."

"As private persons," interrupted Mrs. Darlington eagerly, "we spend as much as we please without fear of criticism; but lavish public expenditure seems to immediately raise the ghost of Cæsarism. I think a bold step should be taken to explode this fallacy."

"It raises the ghost of Cæsarism," said Dr. Brighteck, "because, politically, we represent the masses who, as individuals, are poor, and live simply. They therefore wish a government whose social aspect is democratic in the sense of plain living," he added, but tentatively. "The masses have the notion that plain living goes with hard work, morality, honest sentiment and a higher level of thought."

"It does not follow because a poet allied plain living and high thinking that they are logical adjuncts," said Bryan, but indifferently. "What did Wordsworth, browsing among the hills of Westmoreland for nearly a century, know of the trend of things during the second half of the nineteenth century? I'll venture to say that oftener than not, plain living, when forced upon a man, lowers

the plane of thought. Plain livers from necessity, as the masses are, can never forget where their bread and butter comes from. They generally take a sordid view of ways and means for fear of losing what little they have gained."

"All very well in theory, Mallory," said Dr. Brighteck, "but facts contradict your argument. Every reform begins with the masses. 'Direct taxation' is a popular measure. 'Tariff reform' is the cry of the people."

"Oh, no," said Bryan, deliberately yet incisively. "'Tariff reform' is the cry of frightened England. It is the wail of famine-stricken Europe," speaking as a prophet, he added.

"As for considering the simple tastes of the masses," continued Mr. Darlington, as if his flow of speech had suffered no hiatus, "that would be folly. Our so-called masses are forever in transition. Our poor of to-day will be the rich of to-morrow. The miners, immigrants, cattle-dealers and settlers on pre-empted land are the fathers of our present and future aristocracy—that is, of our social leaders. Money and brains in a country like this are bound to come to the front. We are as fluid socially as the ocean, into which run the waters of continents. The accident of a new mine, a profitable ranche, the opening of manufactories at centres of travel, the tremendous developments of our oil wells and wheat fields, the absence

of any true system of caste, these and kindred things change the fortunes of large numbers so quickly that we shall be successful as a government according to our interpretation of the growing demands and awakened desires of the newly rich. People talk of all our land being taken up. Why, look at Alaska—still virtually unoccupied, and embracing a territory about one-sixth as large as the rest of the United States. Does Prussia fear that the superb palace at Potsdam, with its costly appointments and formalities will impoverish Germany? And yet, Alaska alone is as large as the British Islands, together with Prussia, Spain and Italy. Its outlying islands are about the size of Maine. And as for surplus space within the limits of the States, turn your eyes to Montana. Look at the valleys of the Sevan and Clear Water rivers. They have fifteen hundred square miles of fine timber and vast reaches of ‘first-class’ agricultural land. These two valleys would support a respectable European dynasty. The neighboring mountains are full of gold, silver and copper,—and game, about which there are such fears of its extinction, abounds there. I am told there is excellent shooting in the way of moose, deer, elk and even mountain lions——”

“Burr-r,” said Ethel, with such an excellent, far-away rumble in her throat, that all laughed.

“We are certainly enormously wealthy, collect-

ively and individually," said Mrs. Caruthers, with a kind of neat precision. "I've been thinking of the Hebrew element lately, and I confess their thrift, their happy domestic life, and the palatial splendor of their homes astonish me. I went up to the city yesterday and stopped for lunch with a Jewish—friend." She uttered the last word with the faintest hesitation, as if she owed it to the dinner company, perhaps, to keep in the background so comprehensive a word as "friend," but as she uttered it, she did so genuinely and heartily.

Portia's eyes expanded with a momentary, warm glow. She looked at Bryan Mallory, caught his glance, and they exchanged a cordial, appreciative smile. Each had liked Mrs. Caruthers better for daring to have a Jewish friend.

"Well?" said Mrs. Candace invitingly to Mrs. Caruthers.

"My friend took me through her house. I never saw anything like it in the city before. It contained fortunes tucked away in corners, or invested in single pieces of tapestry, or in curios in carved rock crystal, ivory and china. I won't mention the chambers hung with silk tapestry, or the solid wall cabinets of Dresden china, filled with bric-a-brac as costly, or the secret closets for Dutch antiquities in silver, or the door panels painted by masters of the art of mural decoration. These

are mere trifles. Fancy the dressing-bureaus laden with every imaginative toilet article in silver or ivory, each piece set with real gems; fancy a table containing twenty or thirty curiosities in gold, in the way of Sedan-chairs, snuff-boxes, oriental animals, etc., every one a work of art."

"Didn't it all look superfluous and barbaric?" asked Mrs. Candace simply.

"Really, no. The arrangement was so perfect."

Elizabeth Candace shook her head as though such a display of multifarious possessions were the farthest from her taste.

"I am told," said Mrs. Darlington, "that the consolidated Hebrew vote, if turned to political reform, would number 20,000 in New York alone. These wealthy Jews are becoming a force. We must utilize them politically. In order to do so, our people must break down this foolish prejudice of centuries. The fact is, we have become so rich, counting all the elements of our population, that the time has certainly come, as Mrs. Candace said," she added, as if wishing support in what she was about to advance, "to crystallize socially. We should elaborate our living. My ideal of residence for the President's family, for instance, would be a city like New York during the early winter, Washington while Congress was in session, a resort like Lakewood for March, the White House

perhaps for late spring, a summer house near the Capital through June, and the coast for midsummer. The trying conditions of American climate could thus be quite, if not entirely, avoided. Then, too, we should have ambassadors instead of ministers."

"Ambassadors would please the German population, I suppose," remarked Bryan. "They are such lovers of the places and methods they have immigrated from. I gather, too, from their conversation, that the lowest class they belonged to at home was the professional, and that every other family lived while in the Fatherland in a castle. They should have remained in a country where they were so advantageously situated."

"But consider the Germans one minute," said Mr. Darlington. "In wealth and numbers they greatly outrank the Hebrew contingency." He bowed to Mrs. Caruthers who felt the gratification every woman does when her view on politics or economy is treated with respect. "Look at Chicago, St. Louis, Milwaukee; see the size of the German vote."

"I like the Germans," said Ethel, "because they understand money value so thoroughly."

"They have done away with many of our Colonial ideas, which, on the Fourth of July and Thanksgiving Day, we count among the forces that fashioned us a nation. They have rendered

fortunes made by the sale of beer social passports," said Dr. Brighteck.

"England is still in advance of us in this last respect," replied Bryan, "for there, beer and titles are synonymous. However, setting beer and braggadocio aside, the Germans must be considered not only in the way of occupying miles of our territory, in which one never hears a word of English spoken; not only in the way of Sunday concerts and a European Sabbath, but as a solid force representing vast wealth and legions of voters." He glanced at Portia, who was mentally summarizing the varied influence of this aggressive national unit.

"To have ambassadors represent us in France, Germany, Russia, and England would mean an increase of salaries," said Dr. Brighteck meditatively.

"As a matter of course," assented Mr. Darlington. "Think what it has been in the past to meet the duties at St. James and Berlin on seventeen or eighteen thousand a year."

"Yet there have been men who have sustained the situation with dignity," said Portia.

"It should never have been required of them, never have been required of them," exclaimed Mr. Darlington emphatically.

Bryan Mallory looked at him scrutinizingly, realizing that he seldom expressed himself even

indirectly in praise of his political opponents. He respected Mr. Darlington, however, as a man free from the party vice of slander.

"The chief benefit I can see arising from a large increase in official salaries," said Dr. Brighteck, "would be the bringing of brains, capacity, and Americanism to the front. Any office should support the incumbent. I wish we might have an interregnum, say of two years, in which a cabinet should be chosen on the same basis as an arbitration committee, to settle a multitude of vexatious matters which each political party is afraid to shoulder."

"Better have such questions decided as they arrive," said Bryan, "even if we get at them through as clumsy a machine as British precedent. There always comes a moment when they can no longer be laid on the table, if they are really vital. We have seemed to-night to lay great stress on our riches. It seems to me we should never for one moment forget they are held by a people as heterogeneous as that constituting the Roman Empire. We have Montana and Alaska, to be sure," nodding towards Mr. Darlington and smiling slightly; "but England and Germany are monopolizing Africa. Russia and England still have the Indian question to settle. I can easily fancy such a state of things occurring as to destroy a large part of the prospective wealth of this coun-

try. Let Europe fully utilize her colonial possessions, and at the same time withhold or withdraw from us her capital seeking investment. Let our people become so denationalized that the imports steadily exceed the exports. Let our currency continue to decline. It would only take a year or two for us to perceive a shadow reaching from the Atlantic to the Pacific as ominous as that preceding the downfall of Eastern monarchies. Our National banks, backed though they are by the Treasury, cannot stand too severe a strain."

"Babylon is fallen—fallen!" said Ethel, dramatically. "I always liked the sonorous ring of those words. They are about all I know of Babylon."

"Read Marie Corelli's *Field of Ardath*. You will at least gain impressions if not acquire facts," suggested Portia.

"Is it very hard reading?"

"It is a novel."

"Oh. Don't forget then, Angora, when you go to town to-morrow to order it for me. Do let us drop these heavy, indigestible subjects and talk of something more interesting. There is to be a ball, by the way, at the 'Lakewood' soon for sweet Charity's sake. I am one of the patrons, and as you are too, Mrs. Darlington, it is sure to be a great success."

"What charity is it?" asked Perth, who had been a silent listener till now.

"One of the three K's—quoting the German Emperor; the Day Nursery for Children. I am glad there is one man living still who thinks children, church, and kitchen—Kinder, Kirche, and Küche—enough to claim the time and strength of woman."

"If they only did!" exclaimed Elizabeth.

"They are at least her realm," replied Ethel, "and I am going to work for this ball with enthusiasm—and dance—oh, how I shall dance!" she looked with girlish defiance and mirth at Dr. Brighteck while rising from the table.

When Bryan Mallory joined the ladies soon after, he sat down beside Portia, who was still sipping her black coffee.

"Did it occur to you, Mr. Mallory, that with all our dissertations on race at dinner we never mentioned the Irish?"

"It is because they are the leaven merely. They stimulate mind and emotion, giving enthusiasm and energy to most of the great movements of the English speaking peoples."

"Is that a fact?" asked Portia, much astonished.

"I'll give you a task. Look up the ancestry of the writers, scientists, generals and statesmen of America and England. Six of our presidents had Irish blood in their veins. It is odd, by the way, how Chinese, Hungarian and Italian immi-

gration has improved the status of the Irish immigration and how the Irishman in politics has brought the names prefixed with an O or ending with a Y to the front. Look at the names to-day on society lists. A quarter of them are Irish."

"Yours is an Irish name, Mr. Mallory."

"You must allow me therefore a word in favor of Erin."

"As many as you like. I never forget the Irish were Kelts, that ancient, mysterious people who owned all of Great Britain and Western Europe long before the Germans dispossessed them."

"I suspect there is an Irish strain in your own composition, Miss Max, with such a tell-tale eye as yours is. What is it—hazel or gray. It is at all events the queen of colors for a woman's eye."

"I am sure now, what between our compliments and politeness we are both as Irish as Irish can be," said Portia laughing. "But, sh! Mrs. Candace is going to sing."

"If she intends to sing the scales in Italian or phonetics in German I shall escape to Grace's den for a smoke."

"I am sure she will not. Her repertoire is entirely made up of old English ballads or Southern songs. There—look. She is putting 'Way down upon the Swanee River' on the music-rack."

He sank back in his chair.

"Did you ever read those darkey songs over as literature?" he asked. "If you never have, you ought to do so. You will find nothing in them but stray, disconnected thoughts, and yet when they are sung by the right person they become oracles. They affect me like the study of the Sibylline prophecies or the finest chapters in Isaiah."

Elizabeth's voice rang out with the first words.

"It has the timbre for this sort of melody," he said contentedly.

Portia found herself listening with a new interest to the familiar song. She thought of the time when she heard Nilsson sing it, the tears raining down her cheeks in the first agony of orphanhood. Now the words had a larger meaning. They were the wail of seven millions of mankind whose voices have the pathos of a people for generations without a name or a birth-right.

"It was a shame to ask you to sing so soon after dinner, dear Mrs. Candace," said Ethel, but placing with entreating looks another ballad before her. "One more—please!"

"Then I shall sing a long forgotten and very simple one, but it always gives me the suggestions that just one string of an Æolian harp delicately struck by the wind does. Do you remember—

“ ‘Do they miss me at home, do they miss me?
’Twould be an assurance most dear.’ ”

Dr. Brighteck stood beside the piano. She glanced towards him with the words:—

“ ‘To know at this moment some loved one
Were saying I wish she were here.’ ”

Her white lids fell as if she either did not want to or ought not to read his intense longing vanishing with the fear of detection.

It was a company that broke up throughout the evening into groups of two, but with enough general conversation to maintain its unity.

When Portia went upstairs to put on her wraps, it no longer seemed either impossible or unreasonable that she was to drive with Bryan Mallory in one of his lofty vehicles. If he wanted her to drive with him, the old cloak and debateable bonnet must weather the exposure. She felt happy. She really loved Ethel for having invited her to this dinner.

And Ethel in her dressing-gown in Mrs. Candace's room an hour later, said:

“The dinner was my silent apology to Portia for the notion I had about those gloves. There is a little good in me, but you are the only one who can force it into action.”

“Portia had a good time,” said Elizabeth, kissing Ethel's flushed, softened face, “and among us all we must manage to give her others.”

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN the day came for the drive, the weather was kind.

A languorous southeast wind was blowing. The sky looked humid and warm. There was a delicious balminess in the atmosphere. The green pines spread out their hands as if thawing from cold pulses the paralysis of numberless frosts and rains. The lake had lost its steely hue. It was a lovely, spring day, but with a hint of that beguiling treachery possessed by some women, and adding a tone of mystery and suggestion.

Portia ventured to wear a Paris wrap that was not very thick, but which, although several years old, looked encouragingly like the present fashions. When she tried it on and saw how the lustrous silk with its feather trimmings lent a softness and color to her olive skin, no nature-worshipper could have more simply thanked the day for being propitious. Having ventured to buy a new aigrette for the old bonnet, as well as fresh strings, she found the hat which all winter had so persistently worn a subdued, unworldly air

assume a smart complacency, lending to her face an assurance it had not borrowed from her heart for many a day. Just the simple facts of a north wind and a frosty night would have spoiled all this, she thought, and one of those irresistible impulses of human nature to believe that God shifts tempests and sunshine to suit personal needs possessed her spirit with a sense of special Providence.

So when Bryan drove up in a lofty two-wheeler, drawn by three light bays tandem, she met him with a comfortable sense of being rather more adequate in appearance than her usual costumes might have indicated.

His face betrayed no surprise over the resurrected splendor of her wrap, but it had that unmistakable expression which any man's countenance wears when he sees a woman whom he is about to accompany looking better than usual. However, he was now so deeply interested in Portia that she might have taken many disenchanting liberties with her appearance without a particle of risk.

It seemed like old times to her to be sitting in that luxurious vehicle beside a "fashionable" young man and bowling over smooth roads and through a charming country. The return of a former situation brought back the feeling belonging to it. She grew gayer and brighter with

every mile they covered, and as he looked into her flashing eyes and saw the mere joy of living blot out the incipient melancholy and restore a touch of girlishness, his interest deepened.

A bewildering contentment, vaguely ecstatic, stirred his deliberate nature. A novel uncertainty and timidity gradually awoke in him the query whether he were the kind of man such a woman could possibly love. He became silent and constrained. Under these influences, Portia, too, grew quieter, reproaching herself that she seemed unable to be more entertaining.

Bryan held the reins with a strong, skilful hand. The leader kept up a steady run with which the other horses were in spirited accord. Their light coats shone like ripened chestnuts freshly torn from the burr. The wheels made a muffled crunching in the sandy roads very pleasant to listen to. The wind was in their faces. It curled the hair about Portia's temples. It left a delicious taste of salt on her lips. The resinous fragrance everywhere suggested miles of primeval forest.

After a time they turned and began making a very gradual ascent, reaching in a little while the top of the only hill for miles around. It was crowned with an ill-kept graveyard. There were many nameless mounds. Here and there rose a pretentious monument. The grass was tall and

dry, and the wind on this elevation, coming in straight from the sea nine or ten miles away, crooned through the scanty spears like a lonesome mother unburdening her grief.

Below them stretched the pines, miles in extent, their even green tops unbroken by a clearing of any sort, their polished needles glistening in the sun, and their gleaming, dark-green expanse brooded upon by the travelling shadows, suggesting now a field of grain and again the grander sweep of the billowy sea. Far, far beyond, like a strip of silk ribbon along the horizon, glistened the ocean, while dimly visible at intervals appeared a sail that vanished in the haze while they were looking.

"This is an unusual sight," said Portia. "I have been in the pines and on the borders of the pines, but never before have I looked down on thousands upon thousands of them. It is like being in a new world, solemn, unsubstantial and splendid, a world immaterial, made up solely of movement and color."

"Yes," said Bryan, sententiously. He was not a talker in the presence of a beautiful view.

Presently a party of country people, packed closely in a four-seated open vehicle, dashed to the top of the hill. There were many immediate exclamations.

"Look, there is a steamer!"—"Do you think

it is a coaster?"—"How many sails do you see?"—"Oh, did you ever look over such a lot of pines before?"—"I hate to be among these graves. Time enough for that one of these days, ha, ha, ha!"

Portia glanced at Bryan as if the sanctity of the view and the repose of the sleepers had been desecrated. "I do not think I shall ever express myself again over the beauty of scenery—at least it seems so to me now."

"Really," he said, "I am of the opinion that such expressions as those we have heard are better than none at all. I suppose even your perceptions of nature were once rudimentary."

"Not were, but are still. Everything we say is rudimentary in its adequacy."

"Yes," said Bryan again. "I think, though we would better make approaches in our speech to what we are thinking about."

"If we only dared. But most of the time speech is merely the cover of thought."

"You are the kind of person who can always speak the truth or else keep still," he added. "The abiding mischief is done by the people between these two extremes, people of 'tact.' They make one so tired."

The party in the four-seated vehicle now started to leave. Their driver hurried his horses recklessly over the narrow road curving around the

summit, and the heavy wheels began to cut into a plot the mounds of which were near the edge.

"Look out," cried Bryan. "You are going to cut into those graves."

The driver turned a sunburned, good-natured heavy face towards him. "It don't matter," he shouted. "They'll never know."

Portia drew up her shoulders with an involuntary cringe.

"O, how brief is our power. How helpless we shall soon all be. I never see a spot like this without wondering about the silent voices and buried secrets. I think I would know it, even lying as deep as that," and she pointed to a high mound much overgrown with harsh, waving, reed-like grass, "if some unthinking person walked over my body or let his horse mar the last little home I lived in."

"No, no, you wouldn't," said Bryan, with much cheerful energy. "If there is one thing you will leave behind when you go away from this life it will be any concern for a mound of earth enclosing a something just as material."

Her gray eyes expanded. She felt hurt. The next instant she realized he was looking at her tenderly.

She was indeed too real and too imbued with life at just that moment for his thought of death in respect to her to seem more than an abstrac-

tion. He had given utterance to his philosophy while haunted with her look of sweet earnestness and appreciating her sensitiveness to every passing condition or episode. Her mobile face was full of subtle expressions and perceptions ; it was this spiritual variability which made it so beautiful to him.

He turned the horses slowly around.

"Would you like to go down into those pines for an hour or two?"

"O, yes, indeed," she said eagerly.

They went a long distance without much conversation, but their sense of companionship increased and each was delightfully and soothingly conscious of the other's nearness.

There was no wind when they came fairly under the cover of the forest. The roads were sufficiently sandy for the wheels scarcely to make a sound. The growth of underbrush was scant, and there was something majestic and cloistral about the solitude.

Portia's feeling of freedom grew with her perception of the splendid spaces stretching out in solemn vistas through which the sunshine flickered. All the vague lonesomeness which life in a boarding-house had fostered melted away. It was an immense relief to be separated for one short afternoon from conditions whose smallness she could never lose sight of, no matter how sin-

cere and honest her purpose to make the best of them. It was also delightful to be with a man who probably had no experience of women from the point of view of their possessing a remunerative talent. She had for a long time wished she had such a talent, not only because it was what was expected, even demanded, of penniless women, but because of the inestimable practical advantage it would be to her. To have neither money nor the power to make it professionally blotted a woman from the world socially.

The conventual system, notwithstanding its repressions, had its advantages. It afforded a hiding-place for the proud, sensitive, poor woman with the tastes and habits of good-breeding, but who, in other respects, was simply ordinary and obliged therefore to herd with those whose way of thinking and mode of living were vulgar and sordid. She mentally balanced life as she now lived it and life in a convent. Under those great trees, with their fan-like tops, in that cool, sweet spicy air, under that blue sky over which white clouds drifted with the soaring swiftness of birds, the thought of any kind of freedom, even the freedom of a boarding-house, set her heart a-beating and the fresh, vivid color leaping to her cheeks.

Bryan had relaxed his hold of the reins. He was sitting a little bent over. The horses had

dropped into a slow walk. The road had become so narrow there was not even room for another vehicle to pass easily.

He turned to her with a sudden question.

"Why are you giving these lectures?"

"Why am I giving them?" The question took her breath away. "Not because I think I have any special aptitude," she said, after a very lengthy pause in which she was feeling fluttered and tied again to an environment that, a minute ago, she thought herself so far away from.

"What do you do it for, then?"

The words were abrupt, but his tone was gentle and genuinely inquiring.

"Why—why—can't you understand?"

He looked up—shaking his head—and his eyes roamed idly over the rich cloak she wore.

She noticed his glance and metaphorically her heart wrung its hands. She wished she had had the moral courage to subject her old jacket with its threadbare seams to the glare of this drive. And how chilly and damp the woods were beginning to feel!

She stared at him scrutinizingly. A deep furrow cut itself between her eyebrows.

"Tell me, Mr. Mallory," she said, at length, her forehead relaxing, "what you think is the reason I am talking on Roman Antiquities."

The horses came to a dead halt in a wide am-

phitheatre around which the trees far taller than usual made a splendid colonnade.

He almost dropped the reins, and turning around in his seat, resting his arm across the back, looked at her, then out among the pines, and turning to her again smiled a trifle nonchalantly.

"I suppose I want to know if you are imbued with the universal nineteenth century ambition of women. Is it because you want to be heard and felt?"

"I want a place in the world while I am in it," said Portia, but with a faint question in her voice as if she wondered whether Mr. Mallory would deny her right to it.

"Why, yes. That is human and an awfully modest way of putting it. But it isn't what I mean."

"Do you mean—do I wish to emphasize my individuality?"

He laughed. "You come nearer what I am trying to say."

"But I haven't any particular individuality. I am just an impressible woman with a capacity for being or becoming highly civilized. I am not even like a young girl I heard of who was determined to be something and so decided to be universally sympathetic."

"What do you do it for, then?"

"Mr. Mallory," she said, expostulatingly,

"you have been patient enough to listen to me now three times. I think, if you try, you can answer your own question."

"I would never have asked it, if I could."

The color suffused her face.

Bryan looked up and saw the change.

"Have I hurt you?" he asked, in a startled tone. "I'm sorry. I never thought I had so much curiosity about you, don't you know?"

There is usually but one thing a well-bred woman will forgive a man in the way of expressing curiosity, and that is about her lovers. Although Portia was very much like other women, yet, when Bryan spoke so contritely and apologetically, she desired to satisfy him.

"I lecture for money, Mr. Mallory," she said gravely, her eyes in her lap.

"For money!" he exclaimed in amazement. "Goodness gracious, you are not making anything."

She had a sudden, immense feeling of relief that he at least appreciated a fact the reverse of which Mrs. Grace was constantly emphasizing.

"No, I am not making—anything, but I thought—we thought—the committee and I thought, that perhaps I might in the future. This course is an introductory one."

He sat looking at her in a kind of stupid maze. She was then doing all that hard study, cramming

her memory, subjecting herself to the comment of fifty or sixty persons once a week, just for money—for ten dollars a night! He drew a stifled breath. This little creature, all nerves and fire, as susceptible as a magnet, as dainty as a wind-flower—needing to sell her brains at ten dollars a night, while he had thought she must have a little left, at least thirty or forty thousand say, of the great Max property—and must therefore be doing it in the way of making herself a social force. He would have liked to kick himself.

“Mr. Mallory,” she said, with increasing tension in her clear voice, “I feel, I am sure it must be unbearable for you to hear me. I can see that it would be. No, no,” said the girl, waving her hand nervously in dissent, when he was about to speak, “I want to ask of you, as a favor, to never come again—out of kindness to yourself, please—and—”

She could not go on. What she meant to say was that she would refund him the money for the remaining lecture. He had made her feel like a beggar.

“Oh, Miss Max. I had no idea things were so bad with you. I can’t forgive myself. I was merely studying your lectures as a phase of the woman question. I was not thinking of you as much as of the fact that women are springing up on all sides as talkers, as readers, as lecturers.”

“And why not?” cried Portia, with sudden

energy and a frantic desire to justify them. "Why not, indeed? Men spring up like weeds, too, in the same vocation."

"You have expressed it exactly. It is because they are weeds they flourish."

For a minute she was rebuked by the inference his words made her draw, but recovering herself, she continued,

"There are women who should speak. They have a gift. They are orators. It would be as cruel to repress their splendid energy as it would be to stifle a Patti or a Nilsson, as wrong as it would be to drive Materna or Dusé from the opera and theatre—only— Alas! I am not one of the gifted few. But I need," her honesty impelled her to the final utterance, "I need to earn money, and this way opened first."

"Miss Max, if I could get down in the dust on my knees to ask your pardon, the condition would be an easy one."

"I suppose you have only said what everybody is thinking," replied Portia ruefully.

"All I hear on every hand is that the lectures are giving the greatest satisfaction and that it is simply delightful to have a lady and not some ordinary woman refresh our memories on subjects we have all forgotten."

"The subjects are awfully dry," said Portia, "but I don't know enough to talk on topics of the

day. That means such a deep back ground of gathered knowledge. I can read up on Roman Antiquities and not have to stand in terror of digressive questions that embrace the universe."

"You are most wise."

She smiled at the naïveté of his reply.

"Do you forgive me, Miss Max?"

"Freely," she said, laughing.

If Bryan has been unwise in speech he was not unwise in action, for he continued the drive till the conversation so fully reverted to other themes that they both recovered from the awkwardness into which his theories had launched them.

Strange to say, Portia liked him better than ever, but with a sinking conviction when he left her on the threshold of her tower, that whatever romance he might have cherished, it was shattered forever by the sordid circumstances of her life. With the two-edged sword of her knowledge of both sides of a situation, she decided that his point of view must necessarily be a restricted one. The only thing she found fault with, therefore, was her own impulsive acceptance of his invitation to drive.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ball for the "Children's Day Nursery," and the last one of the season was to be given at the 'Lakewood.' The preparations assumed proportions of more than local importance. A special train was to run from New York. The guests from all the hotels were to join in making the evening a conspicuous and brilliant one.

Millicent was wild with delight, for she was sufficiently rested from the onerous dissipation of the city to hail a brief return of the winter gaiety. Between her and Miss Beadle endless discussions on dress were mingled with anticipating queries of possible new arrivals.

Meanwhile Perth let three or four days elapse during which he elaborated his plans with Mr. Gordon. It was finally decided that the latter was to embody the magnificent remnants of a more magnificent fortune gained from gold and lands in California and that a succession of misfortunes had brought on incipient softening of the brain which it was to be Perth's constant effort to avert through the most unwearied devotion. Whatever

peculiar acts Mr. Gordon committed, he was to second, trusting to his wits for explanations to Millicent as exigencies arose.

As the older man felt confident his schemes would be crowned with success, and as his chief fear was that Perth would spoil everything by some impromptu modification, the latter faithfully promised to wait for his cue as implicitly as if he were an actor on a real stage.

Everything therefore being ready for a beginning, one evening, two days before the ball, Perth went down to the office before dinner, hoping to intercept Millicent, who, by this time, was in a desperate frame of mind over an intimacy becoming more golden the farther away it receded.

There were to be some amateur theatricals that night to which Mr. Gordon had bade him manage to invite her informally. A note accordingly being out of the question he had gone downstairs early, knowing she often did likewise.

He was growing anxious when the momentarily ceasing whirr of the elevator led him to glance from the paper he was reading. She stepped out, unattended.

He felt like a swimmer making a last desperate pull for the shore. What if Gordon were all wrong? What if Alice's woman's wit were good for nothing more than putting matters into the most hopeless possible jumble?

Laying his paper across his knees, he looked steadily at her to give her an opportunity to bow.

The crudities of youth are usually guardian angels.

Millicent couldn't possibly refrain from a casual glance, and when, after almost a week of heart-aches, she saw the eyes she had called beloved in her secret soul, fixed upon her with an unmistakable warmth, she nodded indifferently but propitiatingly.

He sprang up with alacrity, meeting her in the middle of the hall.

There was a tacit, instinctive effort on the part of both to act as if no tremendous gulf of consuming self-consciousness had separated them, and each carried this off with perfect success.

"It is such a chilly night I think you will find the settee comfortable," and he led her to a cozy recess beside the fireplace. "What have you been doing all day?" he inquired, bridging over the gap of those other days during which they had not spoken.

"So much that was agreeable. We did the usual things of course this morning—walked and drove. I am expecting Miss Beadle down every minute. I don't know why she doesn't come." She set her head back a little stiffly. "The most

delightful event of the day was the honor of a call from Mrs. Darlington. It was so unexpected. She and mamma were friends in Washington three winters ago, but mamma not being here I didn't think she would take the trouble to come to see me. She did though," Millicent shook her head gleefully, "and it means ever so many lovely opportunities. She presented me with a course ticket to some lectures being given at a few of the cottages by a Miss Max. She says nobody can join the class except on invitation. Very exclusive, you perceive."

He swallowed an envious lump swelling in his throat. If Millicent should be taken up by the cottagers, where would he be?

"I have always heard Mrs. Darlington never forgot old friends," he said, humbly.

"She is simply lovely. I like to look straight into her eyes—they are so true and sweet."

He felt in some way as if this last remark were an implication against his own orbs.

"Are you interested in the theatricals to-night?" he asked.

"Very," she replied, not altogether able to repress the eagerness in her voice.

"I happen to have a number of tickets. Will you take a couple for yourself and Miss Beadle and let me sit beside you?"

"I am sure Miss Beadle hasn't bought any yet

—and—and I'll say 'yes,' anyway." She looked at him with a poorly concealed smile of intense satisfaction.

"I'll join you here then in the office?"

"Very well." Her attention was already arrested by a small, little, extremely ugly-looking man nervously hastening toward them.

"Ah, here comes Mr. Gordon. Do you know him?"

"No," replied the girl distantly.

"He is the very best fellow in the world. He has had all kinds of misfortunes. His mind in consequence appears a little weak just now. He is not really off, but somehow he is different. I have no doubt he will rebound. He is devoted to me—comes to the bank at all hours, merely, he says, to be able to look at me."

She smiled, much pleased, but with affected incredulity.

"He stays at the bank whole mornings. Sometimes the only way I can get rid of him is to go off with him."

"You are very kind, I am sure."

"Oh, no,—but I wouldn't hurt him. Ah, Mr. Gordon," and Perth held out his hand.

Gordon shook it energetically and with many effusive wiggles spreading over his body so sinuously that Millicent wondered if he had any bones. He so nearly bowed to her that Perth

saw he was expected to introduce them, which he did to the girl's rising surprise.

Her displeasure momentarily took the wind from her lover's sails, but Mr. Gordon drew up a chair, sat down on it astride, his arms folded across the back, and began asking questions so rapidly that she forgot herself in his terrible volubility.

Hearing the rustle of a dress and looking around she beheld Miss Beadle. She welcomed her chaperon with a radiant smile.

But that lady was staring at Mr. Gordon scrutinizingly and with a gleam of puzzled recognition.

He was so busy talking, however, that apparently he did not see her, though she stood a minute beside them.

Finally he looked up.

All over her fine, usually colorless skin stole the shadow of a blush, lending a wonderful softness and youthfulness to her expression.

"Miss Beadle! Is it not?" he exclaimed, after a moment's silence, evidently, on her part, charged with teeming memories.

"Mr. Gordon—of Chicago?"

"San Francisco," he replied, promptly.

"Oh," with a shade of disappointed bewilderment.

"But formerly of Chicago. Dick Gordon of Augusta, Maine, twenty-five years ago."

"I thought I knew you," and she sank down on the settee beside Millicent.

Gordon having touched Perth's knee, he rose irresolutely, asking Millicent to take a turn to see what the weather promised. "If it should be fair, every seat will be filled to-night."

"I hope it will be clear," she said eagerly. "The play will be better if there is a full house."

"Don't run off with him," said Gordon effusively as the young people walked away. "If he is not my son he may be my heir. I never lose sight of him long at a time."

She stared haughtily at the swarthy, meagre face of Perth's worshipper. He returned her look with one of mingled suspicion and hostility.

"How can you stand it?" she asked, as they sauntered down the corridor.

"Oh, I don't mind, personally. He is the soul of goodness. And then he is so genuinely devoted to me that I suppose I am rather flattered."

"Is he in earnest about making you his heir?"

"You heard what he said," replied Perth, laughing.

"Is he—well, awfully rich?"

"He doesn't think so! A trifling amount of ten millions. What is that after having had thirty," said the young man with immense scorn.

She glanced at him, impressed to the extent of muteness.

"Did you notice your chaperon when she recognized him?" he inquired. "It looks as if there had been an antediluvian romance between them."

"Oh, I wonder—if there has!" she clasped her hands ecstatically. "Wouldn't it be too delightful to watch Miss Beadle in the agonies of a frantic love-affair. I never thought of such a thing as my chaperon——"

"Being in love with mine," ventured Perth, archly.

"H'm! And does he hang around you to that extent?"

"He only came down a day or two ago. I can't tell. Perhaps he will let me off a little at Lakewood. He is beginning to pick up some acquaintances. He was very lonesome in New York."

"It wouldn't be wise to forget those ten millions, would it?"

"Money never was my chief consideration."

She glanced at him under her lashes. "He is mortally ugly to look at, isn't he?"

"Do you think so? You will be surprised, no doubt, then, when I tell you I find him rather fascinating."

"Oh!" she gave a little scream.

"I suppose it is because he is so magnetic."

"You mean repulsive!"

"Positively no. And then, you know, I am expecting to see his original strong mind assert itself with all its former tremendous force. Meanwhile—well, he is a true friend, and I intend to stand by him through thick and thin."

"I admire your loyalty. But I hope he will keep at a distance—from—from my neighborhood."

They were now joined by Miss Beadle and Mr. Gordon in animated conversation, over old times it is safe to presume.

The two ladies presently went in to dinner. The others lingered behind to wait for Mrs. Caruthers.

"The beginning is everything, old fellow, and it was first-rate. By the way, Miss Beadle is a very nice sort of woman."

"I am afraid of her. She affects me like a Medusa."

"I have seen her in the past play the part of Circe to perfection. That was twenty years ago."

"When I was in knickerbockers!" retorted Perth contemptuously. "She is an antique now."

"So is the Venus de Medici. Don't scoff at twenty years ago. You will be there before you know it. And you will find it a mighty nice, cool, breezy place. It is a temperate region without any of the heats of summer or chills of win-

ter. I'll venture to say that if Miss Beadle—such a thing isn't possible, of course,—could fall in love, she would have more true sentiment in five minutes than that little girl of yours in a year."

"I wouldn't change," said Perth, complacently.

"Well, I'll see you through, but, upon my word, I wouldn't take her as a gift."

"I would like to see you tempted."

"Miss Beadle," said Millicent, in a delighted whisper, as if Perth might overhear her at a distance of two hundred feet. "Mr. Kent says he happens to have a lot of tickets for to-night, and so, as we hadn't bought ours yet, you know—I took two from him, one for you and one for me."

Miss Beadle's face assumed an incipient severity. "Where is he going to sit?"

"Near us, I suppose. One usually buys seats all together."

"Very well, but do not do so again before consulting me."

"When did you know Mr. Gordon?" asked the young girl.

"O, it is so long ago I have almost forgotten."

"You blushed so when he spoke to you."

"I couldn't blush if I tried. My skin is too old and thick."

"But you did."

"Will you have your roast beef as rare as this?"

"Yes. Was he an old beau of yours?"

"He was young when I was."

"You must have been very amiable ever to have permitted him to pay you the least mite of attention."

"What is the matter with him?"

"O,—so horrid to look at. Don't you think so? Such little bits of beads of eyes. Such a wiggler."

"Mr. Gordon is not handsome in the strictest sense of the term, but he is something far better. He is clever."

"Clever! Why"—and she leaned far over the table to whisper—"he is threatened with softening of the brain."

"The idea! He couldn't have softening of the brain. He has a mind as alert as a mainspring."

"A mainspring breaks now and then."

"It snaps, but it never slowly runs down."

"Yes it does."

"You are so literal."

"Well, all I know is Mr. Edwards said so," and Millicent compressed her lips as if she had given utterance to an infallible dictum.

"Mr. Edwards would better be careful how he goes about clouding a man's reputation."

"There are different kinds of that trouble, they say, now. You can get all over it without danger of its coming back. It isn't insanity."

"He never had it," said Miss Beadle with determination.

"And he says the poor fellow is so awfully fond of him that he haunts his steps night and day."

"It looks very bad for Perth Edwards."

"Quite the contrary, I should say. It means, I think, that he finds something splendid and strong in his young friend to lean on. I told Mr. Edwards, though, that personally his chaperon was disagreeable."

Miss Beadle's brow wrinkled in unconscious perplexity and annoyance. She left the last remark unanswered, not willing to descant further on the merits or demerits of her old friend. Besides, a long buried memory was obstinately asserting itself. She sat there prosaically eating her dinner with a good appetite; but in spirit she was young again and standing with Dick Gordon on the verge of an unlimitable prairie. She felt the hot wind sweeping the brown locks back from her temples. She saw her former lover with his head uncovered, his forehead unwrinkled and unpinched by disease or care. She was looking with him at a crystalline vault of blue reaching down in a vast circle over a billowy expanse of prairie through whose grasses were moaning the sighs and indecipherable sadness of an unpeopled solitude. They were watching the sun, a hot crimson ball, lighting up the haze on the horizon

with opaline colors and sending streaks of radiance over the ocean of swaying verdure. They stood thus together, an eager question on his lips unspoken, an eager heart on her part wishing to respond. For a reason not quite known to either the opportunity had passed. He had gone farther West. She had returned East. Yet neither could forget a relation so utterly without expression in words that it fell to pieces when they were separated from its very intangibility.

Twenty years had passed and here they were tossed together by chance beside the Atlantic, each tired, middle-aged heart carrying unstained its youthful ideal and each knowing so well the loneliness coming with the severance of tie after tie, though the consciousness might not have stirred in them an abiding sense of instability had their youthful associations remained unbroken.

Millicent would indeed have been astonished could she have known that beneath the immobile mask before her was a throbbing energy of capacity to love, a steadfast persistency of loyalty which would put to the blush her own variable heroics of confidence and despair.

They went immediately to their rooms after dinner to make some slight alteration in their dress. While they were thus engaged, a boy left the tickets at the door.

Millicent added a pretty lace bertha to her cos-

tume, happy in the thought that Perth had laid a long plan by which he could have her very much to himself while not offending her chaperon.

When they reached the office, they saw him at some distance, wandering restlessly back and forth, but stopping to speak at every turn to a group of people whom Miss Beadle's quick glance labelled as promiscuous. Mr. Gordon appeared to be the magnet of the motley collection.

As soon as Perth discovered the two ladies he hastened towards them with an expression at once conciliatory and eager. They walked along together to the ball-room where the play was to be given.

All at once, to her surprise and displeasure, Miss Beadle found herself one with the little group, the various members of which were doing their utmost to entertain Mr. Gordon. He introduced her without ceremony to a half dozen of his newly-made acquaintances, performing the same gratuitous service for Millicent who was in a quandary between her delight in having Perth at her side and chagrin at being blended with a lot of unaristocratic-looking people whom she didn't know anything about.

"You see, my dear," Miss Beadle found an opportunity to say in a low tone, "what taking those tickets has involved us in. What would your father say if he could see us at this moment?"

"Give me your tickets, Miss Beadle," said Mr. Gordon, as they drew near the door.

Being in almost as advanced a state of general perplexity as Millicent, she handed them to him.

At the door there was a great ado.

The company of strangely assorted people came to a dead halt while Mr. Gordon drew out seven or eight more tickets from his vest-pocket, pointing with his thumb very much as the father of a family might, right and left, until he had included all his guests.

Meanwhile they made a perfect blockade at the entrance, and Millicent, glancing over her shoulder to see how many were kept waiting, discovered Mrs. Grace embracing the situation with an amused smile and Mrs. Darlington gazing at her intently and with considerable surprise.

She turned to her chaperon and whispered,—
"O, it is horrid!"

But Miss Beadle did not hear, for even in that noisy situation Mr. Gordon had alluded to prairies, calling the same glow to her face that had touched it when they first met.

They were finally inside, marching like a school to a row of chairs in the centre and unoccupied, except one, which held Mrs. Caruthers, handsomely dressed and swaying a delicate lace fan. She appeared as much surprised as Millicent over the vast extent of Mr. Gordon's hospitality, but,

as if appreciating his cleverness, watched him assign the seats.

There were two across the aisle. These he reserved for Miss Beadle and himself.

Millicent was delightfully placed between Perth and his cousin, and her previous annoyance vanished.

Miss Beadle's now temperate nature began to warm under the delicate attentions of her old lover. Responsibility's harsh claim passed into temporary oblivion. She glanced once or twice indulgently at Perth, thinking him a fine, manly young fellow, and that Mr. Kent would perhaps better reflect before separating his daughter from a suitor whose worst fault was having no expectations.

The play was a miserably poor one, but no one of the quartette cared for that. Millicent was sorry as each act came to an end. Miss Beadle was wrapped in reminiscences. When Mr. Gordon suddenly asked her if she didn't find the farce tiresome, she assented—for as long as he did, she did.

He sprang from his seat, crossing the aisle to Perth and whispering in his ear. Thereupon Perth said to Millicent,

"The play is detestable. Don't you think so?"

She nodded with an assenting, piquant grimace.

"Suppose we go out," he suggested.

A vision of a long delightful walk in the still corridors and through the glass-covered rotunda, its atmosphere laden with the perfume of numerous flowering plants flitted through her mind.

She rose, greatly pleased.

He leaned over to his cousin. "I'll come back for you, Alice, when the play is over."

In another minute they were in the corridor together, although followed by Mr. Gordon and Miss Beadle.

Perth turned in at the first parlor door. He led Millicent to a divan. "It is rather hot for walking, don't you think so?"

"Perhaps," she replied.

Mr. Gordon briskly drew up two easy-chairs in front of the young people, beginning a conversation with Mr. Edwards with as much eagerness as though they had not seen each other for a year.

Millicent began to pout. She considered the two men extremely rude.

The ladies thus temporarily set aside became constrained.

Mr. Gordon soon looked at his watch. "I saw an old friend in the front row. Haven't met him in ten years. I noticed a vacant seat beside him."

"Wouldn't you like to join him?" asked Miss Beadle, good-naturedly. She suddenly longed to go to her room to gather her thoughts together after such a surprising evening.

"If you'll excuse me I think I would," he said with alacrity. The words were no sooner spoken than he seemed to have disappeared.

"Perhaps you think you ought to go back to Mrs. Caruthers," said Millicent to Perth, but confidently expecting an eager dissent.

"I suppose I ought," he replied regretfully. "She has invited Mr. Gordon and me to make two at a whist-party in her parlor after the play."

"Yes?" said the young girl, a hot color in her cheeks, her eyes flashing.

"I am awfully sorry. May I hope to see you to-morrow evening?"

Not daring to say no—she had suffered too much already—she nodded half-assent.

"Good-night, Miss Beadle."

The elder lady, pleased with this early departure, said good-night affably.

"Good-night"—to Millicent.

When he was gone, she turned indignantly to her chaperon.

"Wasn't it an outrage, the whole thing? They got us out here on purpose, to get rid of us." She beat the carpet softly with her foot. "Mr. Edwards is just like every other man, after all! Now that he is getting so popular, he assumes a lot of airs and forgets to be polite. I didn't think it of him, indeed I didn't."

"My dear, since we allowed ourselves to be

entertained—so—so promiscuously, so—indefinitely—so *en masse*”—she laughed as an older person will after an awkward situation is at all well ended, “we should be prepared to take the consequences.”

“I should think you would manage better. I’ve always heard you were simply perfect as a chaperon.”

“You took the management quite out of my hands, my dear. But don’t think anything more about it. If you knew Mr. Gordon as well as I do, you would find he does everything differently from other people.”

“I hate such men. They are social blots.”

“My dear! be careful what you are saying.”

“I didn’t suppose Perth Edwards was such a namby-pamby fellow, either.”

“He had to keep his engagement.”

“You mean he preferred other society to ours most of the evening.”

“Really, that is no lack of compliment, unless, of course, he is in love with you.”

“He isn’t,” said Millicent, defiantly and sadly, but silenced.

“Come—come upstairs, child. You have been doing too much to-day.”

Meanwhile Perth had joined his older friend in a room opening off one of the side corridors. He looked anxious and gloomy.

"Seems to me, Gordon, this is a queer way of compassing our ends."

"We are getting along swimmingly. Why, Miss Beadle already views you through my spectacles. She can't see very clearly yet, but she soon will perceive you to be truly a star of the first magnitude."

"And Miss Kent will get so disgusted with us that she will end in throwing me completely overboard."

"Never fear. Of course she is vexed now, but she will react—react before she falls asleep to-night. Importance, popularity, prospects are what you need in her eyes. She is a worldly little thing."

"You may help me attain my end, Gordon, but without remarks, understand, on Miss Kent."

"Forgive me. It wasn't nice."

"No, I don't think it was, and you mustn't do it again, or I will do my own courting in my own way."

"Miss Beadle has a magnificent figure, hasn't she? I always did admire a tall woman with a fine, free step."

"Oh, she is so old I never notice her one way or the other," said Perth gruffly.

His companion turned away, softly whistling.

CHAPTER XVII.

MILLICENT took an early breakfast the following morning. She had fallen profoundly asleep the previous evening as soon as her head touched the pillow, but after a few hours she wakened, and then the review of the various ridiculous events of the evening before kept her mind busy and her temper so vibrant that she was glad to spring out of bed with the first streak of dawn.

A consuming desire possessed her to encounter Perth Edwards. Perhaps he could explain matters. They must have been the odious planning of that more odious Mr. Gordon. She would like to break up such an ill-assorted friendship. Yes, she would. She would tell Perth Edwards, too, that he didn't act as if he were in his right mind.

She stole out of her room so as not to waken Miss Beadle whose repose was undisturbed by the gigantic self-consciousness besetting the young. To find herself in an awkward position simply meant to Miss Beadle never to allow a repetition of it. Above all minor considerations

had been the fact that she had met her friend of twenty years ago. Her most delicate sensibilities had been highly but soothingly stirred. The happy dream of her youth hovered over her spirit, whispering her to child-like slumber. Millicent peeped into her room to see if she were still asleep. The rather thin, pale contour of her face, resting on the palm of her well-kept, jeweled hand, stirred an impatient feeling in the young girl that anybody could sleep like that after being made an exhibition of as they had been.

She sat down at her table without appetite and with wandering, discontented eyes. Yes, there they were together again.

She began to wonder if she had been making a great ado about nothing after all.

Perth now looked over, saw her sitting there alone, and hurriedly and radiantly excusing himself, came across to her. Pulling Miss Beadle's chair out, he sat down, delighted over this opportunity for a tête-à-tête.

"We were just talking about you when I looked up and saw you. We were planning a drive—my friend Gordon and Alice and I—and we want Miss Beadle and you to be of our party."

"How much of a party do you expect to have?" she asked, her lips curving while she looked away.

"O, no one else."

"No? I supposed Mr. Gordon would want at least a stage-load."

"He is awfully gregarious, that's a fact. But this time, I am sure, he wishes to cut things down, and besides"—he leaned forward confidentially and appealingly—"Alice and I think it a good thing for him to be out of doors as much as possible."

"Then the drive resolves itself into giving Mr. Gordon an airing."

"You are hard on a fellow. You don't want to dry up all the springs of human kindness in one, do you?"

"It is well enough, Perth, for Mr. Gordon to adore you. I have no objections; but I don't like to see you act like a spinning-top whenever he comes around—as if you hadn't a mind of your own."

"O, I have plenty of mind of that sort, but the obligations of friendship are very real to me. Shall I tell Mrs. Caruthers that you'll go?"

"I can't promise till I have seen Miss Beadle."

"I'll get Gordon to ask her. Then it will be all right. He is so happy over the discovery of one of his prehistoric loves."

"She is splendid."

"I didn't say she wasn't. You had better go, though, if only for her sake. If Gordon should find her still all he thought her in those bygone ages, perhaps——"

She laughed heartily. "I'll go, provided there are to be no others except Mrs. Caruthers and we four."

"All right. I'll tell Gordon and get him to intercept your chaperon when she comes down."

"Aren't you afraid to finish your breakfast without your chaperon?"

"Not a bit. Good-bye, then, till this afternoon at four. Lucky the bank closes at noon on Saturdays, isn't it?"

When alone again an ethereal serenity pervaded her spirits. She was thrilled on looking out of the window by the sunshine and the blue sky. What a fine day it promised to be.

When Miss Beadle came in to breakfast a few minutes later, she did not even remark on Millicent's early rising. "And how unconscionably long I have been sitting here, too!" the young girl said to herself. There was, in fact, the faintest shade of embarrassment about the elder lady as she explained and even accounted for her interview with Mr. Gordon.

"I said we would go, if you were willing, dear."

"And I told Mr. Edwards I would go if you were willing."

"Very well, then. And, oh, Mr. Gordon explained the rather awkward situation of last night."

"To your perfect satisfaction?"

"Yes."

"Then we will let it drop. How are you going to inform him of our acceptance?"

"He said he would see me in the office after breakfast."

"Would you mind, Miss Beadle, if I went over to Mrs. Caruthers' table and sat with her a few minutes? She is alone."

"Go, by all means."

A faint smile hovered over Millicent's face as she turned away. Just as she had finished greeting Mrs. Caruthers and had sat down, Mrs. Adina paused to speak with Alice.

Millicent looked at her half curiously and a little suspiciously. At first the young girl thought her a Jewess, but deciding otherwise, received an introduction respectfully and prettily.

There was something superb this morning in Naomi's dark, velvety, soft eyes, wearing always an expression of solemn, haunting earnestness, somewhat contradicted by the smiling curves of her lovely mouth. Millicent noticed the fine white embroidered morning gown, relieved by bands of pale mauve, and the absence of jewelry except an oval amethyst set in pearls at her throat and two rings on her wedding finger, one a narrow band of very small but brilliant diamonds, the other a single diamond of great clearness and beauty.

"Naomi," said Alice, holding her hand lingeringly, "you remember Mrs. Candace, do you not?"

"Elizabeth Hamilton?"

"Yes. She has been on the other side for five years and is now a guest of Mrs. Grace."

"Oh, yes, I remember her perfectly!" replied Naomi in a voice whose clearly-cut tones and delicate intonations affected Millicent like music.

"She is anxious to meet you. She said that in all her travels she did not see a single Oriental face as perfect as yours."

Mrs. Adina lifted her beautiful chin in deprecation.

"She is coming over to spend the morning with me. She will be here at lunch also. Can you join us in my parlor at eleven?"

A gentle radiance overspread Naomi's features.

"I shall be most happy to do so. Thank you." She pressed Alice's hand, bowed with grave courtesy to the young girl and passed on.

"How beautiful!" said Millicent, with a little gasp.

"Yes," said Alice, thoughtfully. "She is as exquisite as a poem."

"By the way, dear," she continued, "you must come too, this morning. Suppose you go and speak to Miss Beadle about it. Invite her also."

Millicent soon returned to say that Miss

Beadle and she would both be there soon after eleven.

"Bring your fancy work, Miss Kent. Mrs. Candace will have hers. The day is cold enough for an open fire. We shall have a delightful morning altogether sitting around it. If you have any music here, bring that. There is a piano in my parlor."

"I'll come laden with a sofa shawl I am knitting for papa and twenty sonatas each an hour long."

"A half one will do," said Alice, laughing and rising. "You and I should be good friends, it seems to me." She walked across the hall with Millicent and then passed on to the office where she met Mr. Gordon in a state of restless excitement.

"How large a breakfast do you suppose Miss Beadle is eating?" he inquired. "One would think she was a camel about to cross a desert."

"It hasn't been the eating but the talking that has detained her," said Alice. "Your patience won't be taxed much longer, for there she is now."

When Miss Beadle and Millicent went to Mrs. Caruthers' parlor they found Mrs. Candace and Mrs. Adina already there. A few minutes later Mrs. Darlington entered followed by Mrs. Grace. As soon as Ethel heard Millicent's name, she held out both hands, apologizing for her delay in calling.

"Such a charming duty as I have neglected!"

Millicent murmured something about hoping the duty would now be transformed into a pleasure and the two sat down on a divan at one side of the fire while the others grouped themselves in a straggling semicircle a little away from the heat.

Outside the sky was brilliantly blue. The pines made a fringe of vivid green against the windows. The wind had risen and its howls and moans increased the sense of inside comfort and warmth.

Millicent had never before been admitted to the familiar conversation and badinage of just such a company of women and she had a timid desire to be equal to the occasion which gave her rather striking beauty a reticence vastly becoming. Ethel quite fell in love with her and began to plan a small dance at which this young girl, in spite of her tiresome mother, should be the central figure.

And Miss Beadle?—What between the appearance of Dick Gordon on her midday horizon and hobnobbing with no less a celebrity than Mrs. Candace in Mrs. Caruthers' private parlor, she began to feel in a sad muddle about her duty to Millicent. If she turned the cold shoulder on Mrs. Caruthers, the child would lose valuable social opportunities of which the chaperon would never hear the end from the disappointed parents. If Perth Edwards should prove to be the heir of her old lover, Millicent could not have a better

prospect matrimonially. As to family connections, she would make a distinct advance in marrying Perth. Her kindly heart had not yet reached the hope of reversions in her own favor, and as for imaginative gloating over her unexpected meeting with a lover silent for many years, this tendency the force of circumstances had long ago crushed out of a nature inclined to facing probabilities. She lived a day at a time at her age not through an heroic effort of will but through lack of will to do otherwise.

Alice was happy over her success in drawing the ladies together informally. She had insisted upon each bringing a piece of fancy work. As she looked over the group busy with the undue industry of a "show" performance, she laughed and said, "One would think we were working for wages. Suppose we relax sufficiently to converse a little. It seems to me we might settle several important matters in such a representative body."

"Give us a text and we will begin," said Ethel. "My tongue is like the clapper of a bell. It will ring both ways, so I can argue on either side."

"There is one thing I would like to speak of here," said Mrs. Darlington, looking around the circle, and that is a public lecture to be given at this hotel by Miss Max. She ought to be brought out here. It would give her an excellent start in her profession."

"Yes," added Ethel, "her lectures of our course are about over and they are no introduction at all."

"When would you have her give the public one, Mrs. Darlington?" asked Mrs. Adina. "In the morning or evening?"

"In the morning, by all means. It ought to be arranged, too, before the season begins to wane. We must have a full room and by that I mean the ball-room."

"O," said Alice, as if out of breath. "We could never get so many people together in the world for a lecture. If it were a dance—now——"

"But we must," replied Mrs. Darlington. "We must use our influence. We must either take a certain number of tickets and give them to our friends and make them promise to come or canvas the hotel and induce people to buy them."

"Do you suppose Portia would like that?" asked Ethel in honest perplexity.

"She need never know. Give her to understand it is her own popularity. That will encourage her. Portia needs a summer outing and this will give her the means for it. Nothing can be done without lobbying," concluded Mrs. Darlington, vivaciously.

"How much ought the tickets to be?" asked Miss Beadle with some anxiety. She fancied herself undertaking the sale of fifty as her share.

"Not more than a dollar," said Mrs. Candace. "People are willing to spend a dollar, but not one cent over. Publishers say it condemns a book to try to sell it for a dollar twenty-five."

"We only pay fifty cents apiece for our lectures," exclaimed Ethel, "and they are given at private houses, too."

"Fifty cents!" replied Mrs. Darlington contemptuously "Twenty-five cents really—for each of us invites a friend or two who want to hear Miss Max at least once. However, the lectures at private houses have a social value."

"Portia can't afford at present to have to pay herself for her social opportunities," remarked Mrs. Caruthers.

"She receives all we agreed to pay her," retorted Ethel in astonishment.

"Anything taken at reduced rates is a gift," said Mrs. Adina, in an even, unemotional tone.

"But, Mrs. Adina, our set has been bringing Portia out. It has been her opportunity. I know lovely women, reduced, and all that sort of thing, who would give lectures for nothing to get started. I am sure Miss Max appreciates our generosity. "Don't you think she does, Mrs. Candace?"

"She has never mentioned her hearers as benefactors to me. I am confident she appreciates any courtesy they may have shown her at its full

value. Portia is one of those women born to overestimate others."

"Why can't we ladies look at things exactly as they are?" said Alice, with a touch of impatience. "We did not get up this course solely for Portia's benefit. We really wanted a set of dances with something literary to give them character through Lent. Portia was available—and we didn't want to spend much money on the lectures, and so—so that's the way it all happened."

"Well," said Mrs. Darlington, with crisp firmness, "I suppose that is about the truth concerning the Roman Antiquities. Portia is my friend—one of my very best friends, and this time I propose to consider her. Will you agree to be responsible for one hundred tickets, Mrs. Candace?"

"Yes."

"And you, Mrs. Adina?"

"Two hundred," said Naomi softly, her dark lashes sweeping her cheeks, while she worked the filoselle in and out of a wild rose.

"I'll take—fifty," said Millicent, hesitatingly, while wondering if she would have to give up the bangle she had set her heart on.

Miss Beadle subscribed for twenty-five, with the reflection only of the keen pangs she had felt years ago on having always to bring up the rear of any enterprise. But she had gotten used to being

neither "hot nor cold" with her charities, as in other affairs, and she named this amount with as much quiet ease as Mrs. Candace had done hers.

"And you, Alice?"

"A hundred, too."

Mrs. Darlington smiled. "We have made an excellent beginning; my husband and I, I am sure, can do a great deal."

"Are you going to sell the tickets to the Jews and all?" asked Ethel.

"We shall have to—here," said Mrs. Darlington, "for I mean to make the proprietors *give* us the use of the ball-room."

Ethel laughed.

"Well, it will be dramatic. Can't you fancy, Mrs. Candace, Portia's father rising from his grave, if he saw her before an audience, and such a mixed one? And her mother! making it her boast that she had never put her foot in a street-car. Dear me! I've known Portia to walk three miles since she became poor, because she hadn't five cents to pay for the luxury of a car-ride."

Mrs. Caruthers was in a state of restless apprehension. Mrs. Darlington and Ethel had never met Naomi, and evidently they also, as Millicent had done, took her for a German. No wave of added color in her olive cheek, no flush of vindictive pride in her soft black eyes betrayed a wounded race prejudice. As the conversation

changed to Portia's antecedents, Alice breathed more freely.

"What are those verses in the Acts of the Apostles?" Ethel continued. "Don't look surprised, Mrs. Candace; I haven't missed reading my Bible a single day in Lent. I want you to appreciate how virtuous I have been. Ah, I remember them: 'Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, *Jews* and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians.' There, I'm out of breath," gasped Ethel.

"And it made me out of breath to hear you talk so fast," said Elizabeth. "You do not mean to say you repeated all those names from merely reading them?"

"I learned them by heart when I was ten, for twenty dollars; I wouldn't try it again to-day for as many thousand."

"Think how Portia has to cram her memory."

"Oh, Portia! she is quite another person," replied Ethel. "But, coming back to the Jews, it seems to me an awful pity to have to ask them."

"I haven't such a prejudice against the Jews," said Miss Beadle virtuously, and as if conscious she must present a singular exception.

"I have a keen sense of their money value to

us in this case," said Mrs. Darlington, "and besides, I am one who wishes to see fairness shown to everybody. This is essentially a Jewish hotel. It is owned by Jews, managed by them, largely patronized by them, and there are hundreds of Christians who were unwilling enough to affiliate with them at the Laurel House who do not find them objectionable enough to stay away from at this house. Truly, we Christians act a great deal of the time as if our comfort were our sole consideration."

"The Jews are so phlegmatic," said Millicent, with a little excitement in her voice. She had sat still a long time and was growing anxious to make an impression.

Alice's foot was tapping the carpet nervously.

"You never had any occasion, surely, child, to come in contact with them," said Miss Beadle somewhat repressively.

"Not socially, of course," replied Millicent with a little air very amusing—"but at school. They are in all the schools."

"Why not?" interrupted Naomi so mirthfully, and lifting for an instant eyes so brimful of amusement, that Alice decided the conversation might as well wear itself out.

"I should think," said Millicent with youthful asperity, "they would have a school of their own—like the colored people."

"What do you think, Mrs. Candace?" asked Mrs. Darlington, fixing an earnest, bright gaze on that lady's face.

Elizabeth folded a handkerchief on which she was sewing a border of lace, stuck her needle into it, wrapped her thimble inside, and put them all in a bag lying in her lap.

By this time the room was very still and each was anxiously awaiting what she had to say.

Even Naomi had dropped her work and was gazing at Mrs. Candace with a serious intensity, but in which there was as yet nothing personal.

Elizabeth glanced around the circle at each one, including Naomi.

"I think many things I hardly know how to put into words. There are the statistics, for instance. The Jews have no paupers in our poorhouses."

"But think of the Russian Jews!" exclaimed Ethel.

"I am speaking of American Jews especially," said Mrs. Candace quickly. "The whole question of Russia is apart from modern civilization. The Jews are freer, I understand, from malignant diseases growing out of scrofulous conditions than any other race."

"Oh, Mrs. Candace, it isn't such facts we want at all," said Mrs. Darlington. "It is the Jews as a social force we wish to consider."

"How can one consider social values apart from

other values?" inquired Elizabeth, "except indeed in a society which has become utterly corrupt."

"But do you *like* them?" inquired Ethel.

"Some of them I do and some I don't," she replied, smiling. "I find them very unimaginative and often, in consequence, tiresome; but then on the other hand they are so appreciative of the highest intellectual culture."

"How can they appreciate the highest mental culture without imagination?" asked Naomi, but in a beguiling voice, and Elizabeth understood Mrs. Adina really wished her to continue.

"Strictly speaking they cannot. However, the Jews have remarkable receptivity for knowledge. Their powers of acquisition are great and their memories retentive. Considering their development in these respects, I have often been struck with the absence of the imaginative element in their conversation. They are without that light play of fancy which makes conversation sprightly and varied."

"Yes, indeed," said Millicent, eagerly. "The girls I knew at school were perfectly omnivorous. They crammed facts, dates—mathematics, of course!" contemptuously. "That was the money expression of their brains. They memorized by the yard, but they had no original ideas. I never knew a single original Jewess."

"How about Spinoza, Herschel, Heine, Rachel,

Isaiah, Daniel, Ricardo, Gambetta, Disraeli and Mendelssohn?" asked Naomi.

"The exceptions prove the rule," said the girl, flippantly.

"Go on, Mrs. Candace," said Ethel.

"They are a very charitable people. There are the Rothschilds, the Montefiores."

"I have been told the Government records of the 'Civil War' show many signal instances of their lavish patriotism," said Naomi. There was now the suspicion of tremulousness in her voice.

"They are such a domestic people," continued Elizabeth.

"So tyrannical to their women," said Ethel. "Why, I went once to a synagogue in Nineteenth Street—the Portuguese Synagogue they called it, and downstairs sat the lords of creation with high hats on, magnificent scarfs over their shoulders—quite oriental they looked. But the poor wives and daughters were cooped up in a hot gallery behind curtains. Such a steaming day as it was too. Those men downstairs looked like regular Turks, as if they would enjoy shutting their wives up, in a harem. And then Jews eat onions and wont touch ham!"

"I thought, Ethel, you had travelled sufficiently to allow for differences of taste among races. Such differences need not make an insurmountable social barrier."

"They are so fond of display," said Miss Beadle, wearily.

"I suppose we all feel they place an undue value on material things," continued Elizabeth, musingly. "But we should keep in mind that they are an Eastern people. They are too acquisitive and this trait sometimes leads to greed and avarice. On the other hand, the whole fabric of American society, since the Civil War, rests on a money basis. Our marriages, our colleges, our churches, our politics seem to stand upon a heap of money. Unlike the Jews, we profess to disregard money. We talk about old families but marry into new ones if they only have money enough and ask no questions about scrofula, criminals, or brains. But we are ahead of the Jew in our finesse, for however greedy we are for money we talk about it perhaps a little less. But we make money the solid background on which to project our social qualities. Haven't you something more to say, Naomi?" continued Elizabeth, turning gently to Mrs. Adina.

"Very little. I do not find the prejudice against Jews unreasonable," she said, looking around the circle. A faint pink gave her fine olive skin a radiance that communicated itself to her melancholy, lustrous eyes. A ray of sunlight struck her head, and the waving, parted hair shone like a raven's wing. "The Jews are aristocrats. They are willing to mingle with other peoples in

all conceivable ways but the only one by which national differences have been settled, race distinctions obliterated, families founded and fortunes cemented. No consideration will ever tempt a true Jew to marry one of another race. If he does, his blood has received a stain that never can be wiped out. There are a few Jews liberal enough to forget this intense race pride in ordinary social relations, and there are a few Christians who will allow the Jew what they would doubtless call the liberty of race prejudice and meet him on the plane of his own choosing—but altogether these exceptions are few.”

“Yours is an exceedingly squelching way of putting things, Mrs. Adina,” said Ethel, laughing. “Your German thoroughness I presume has led you to solve the question in this manner. Let us drop the Hebrews and talk about the Germans. Now there is a people to claim my admiration,” she said condescendingly and smiling to Naomi whose beauty seemed to transfix even her volatile attention.

At this moment a boy came in with a telegram for Mrs. Darlington and the conversation drifted to the ball to take place the following evening.

After the others were gone, Mrs. Darlington, Ethel, and Mrs. Candace lingered behind.

“Alice,” said Ethel, as Mrs. Adina withdrew

and as if a suspicion were taking form—"What is she—a Bohemian or German?"

"She is a Jewess."

"O! Think of all we said. What a dreadful pity such a splendid creature as she is should be—that! She hasn't any of the usual peculiarities. Her nose is beautiful. As for her mouth and chin—if I were a man they would drive me distracted."

"She doesn't consider herself an object of pity," said Alice.

"I thought they were all a little ashamed of their race—the younger generation."

"Not a Jewess like Mrs. Adina."

"There are lots of them at this hotel, aren't there?"

"Why not? The hotel belongs to a Jew, it is managed by them. Don't you suppose the Hebrews feel annoyed because there are so many—Gentiles here?"

"No, indeed. They want our money. They will do anything for money."

"Why do you say that?"

"It is what everybody says and what the world thinks is generally pretty true."

"On the contrary, I as often find it false."

"Those who do not care for our money want our society. They certainly want something. They wouldn't be Jews if they didn't. I should think they would keep to themselves. There is

plenty of room without clashing for people of all tastes in this country."

Alice looked gravely and wonderingly at her as she went on more and more glibly. She liked her extremely. There was such effervescent life in her very expression. She was full of that effective beauty which accompanies a clear complexion and laughing, glowing eyes. But, oh, the prejudices, the restless egotism which always means an overweening self-importance!

"It seems to me," said Alice, gently, as if thinking to herself, "that any one has an unquestioned right to seek acquaintances or friends wherever they promise to be congenial. It is a compliment to me if a person wishes to know me, whether I feel like reciprocating or not. I do not see why Christians should get angry over the mere fact that Hebrews consider them desirable society.

"But they haven't anything in common, dear Mrs. Caruthers."

"I am sorry I invited Mrs. Adina since you feel so strongly on the subject."

"O, I wouldn't strain a point as far as that. I would indeed like to sit where I could look at her an hour without stirring. She is finer than a picture. But, it is too bad she is a Jewess. Come, Mrs. Candace, we must go, if we take that long drive. Good-bye, Mrs. Caruthers, I have had a perfectly lovely time."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE day for the great ball dawned crisp and clear. The tickets had been taken up in the most unexpected quarters. Many of the ladies at the Lakewood had ordered new gowns for the occasion. It was the gala event of the season.

Ethel was in a feverish state of expectation, for her anticipation of dancing, the crowds, and meeting numerous friends from New York was intensified by the fact that she had been more conspicuous than any other lady except Mrs. Darlington in the sale of tickets. She had scored her largest success with Mrs. Lorriève, and both women, born financiers, instinctively looking upon this fact as a bargain rather than a tribute to the "Day Nursery" had mutually reaped the benefit. Mrs. Lorriève having extracted from Mrs. Grace a condescending invitation to call, early grasped the opportunity so hardly won.

To Ethel's consternation the Lorriève carriage swung about the curve in front of her house while her drawing-room was full of visitors. A minute or two later the butler announced: "Mrs. Lorriève; Miss Lorriève."

Mrs. Grace rose languidly and inquiringly from a sofa at one side of the fireplace. Mrs. Caruthers held the cup of tea she had been sipping with an arrested air as Mrs. Lorriève filling the opening between the portières, paused an instant before making what had the effect of an assault.

"Delighted to find ye at home, Mrs. Grace. Mi darter! She was so anxious to meet ye. I've ben talkin' to her about the 'Day Nursery.'"

The unctuous implication in her bold black eyes was irresistible to Ethel, who, seeing a vision of more money, now held out a limp hand to Miss Lorriève but so high that the poor young woman reached after it as if it were forbidden fruit.

Ethel maliciously enjoyed her discomfiture.

The mother and daughter now sank into the nearest chairs—Mrs. Lorriève beside Mrs. Candace whose perception of the situation made her mischievously determine to distinguish the General to whom Mr. Grace had prophesied his wife would capitulate. Miss Lorriève meanwhile kept drawing in her breath spasmodically, expecting each instant to be able to insert a remark in the even flow of Ethel's interminable description of a dog show.

Alice glanced towards her once or twice good-naturedly, sorry for her embarrassment; but her timid yet courageous glance was fixed on her hostess as if every hope in heaven or earth de-

pended on obtaining that obdurate lady's favor.

"And so you are stopping at my hotel, Mrs. Lorriève?"

"Yes'm. I'd tried everythin' else—even bard-in'-houses. We tuk the best rooms of course; but bardin'-houses are no place fer young people. Mi darter has company ivery Sunday"—this mysteriously;—"and thin' we put up at two of the small hotels in turn—but"—with emphasis—"if ye want to see the warld ye must go where the warld is. It'll niver come to you. Now isn't that so?"

Elizabeth replied that it had invariably been her experience.

"It was by bein' at the 'Laurel-in-the-Pines' I met Mrs. Grace. How benivolent she is. She's ben more cliver than I think I'd a ben in raisin' money for the 'Day Nursery'—and so grateful for a small donation!" Here she raised her voice perceptibly. "You'd a thought I'd subscribed five thousand instead of a paltry five hundred."

By this time her resonant, flexible, Irish intonations were dominating all the other voices. Ethel saw herself losing ground. Her shrill American treble was slowly sinking in the ocean of tone flowing from Mrs. Lorriève's vast chest. "And when she urged a closer acquaintance, I said to mi darter we must embrace the opportunity at

once. I felt acquainted in a way with her too fer Mr. Grace once dined with us. I remimber very well his pleasure over the terrapin. It was the first of the season. I had told mi cook we must have it no matter what the expinse. And I was that delighted when Mr. Grace had the third helpin'!"

There was now a perceptible smile on several faces.

"He's a fine, healthy lookin' young man, is Mr. Grace."

"Have you been long at Lakewood, Mrs. Lorriève?" interrupted Ethel, sharply, trying to turn the conversation.

"Not very long; but we expect to stay through the sayson. Mi darter is young."

All now looked at Miss Lorriève, who bore the stare with considerable native ease, while conscious that her twenty-nine years did not endorse her mother's statement very sympathetically.

"And I want her to go to all the various dinners and dances she's invited to. She's in great demand, and I was tellin' a frind this marning that we must have at laste a week's notice if she expected to secure us for her occasion—or rayther I should say function. And how are the subscriptions coming on, Mrs. Grace? I presume ye are all interested as well as Mrs. Grace and me?"

She swept the little circle with her gaze.

They nodded or murmured, "Yes." They had not been so entertained for a long time.

"You remimber, Mrs. Grace, that if the sum is not big enough after the ball to call and let me know. Me or mi darter will help. As each of us carries her own purse, we're of aqual importance. I'm anticipatin' meetin' your husband at the ball again, and I've ben tellin' mi darter how he looks like a raal dancer and that I hope she'll be fortunate in havin' a turn with him. Mr. Sims has an aisy swing and step—he's Daisy's young man—and I want to introduce you to him, Mrs. Grace. You'd find him a good partner in a waltz. I'm sure I can say the same for you too."

A flaming spot burned in Ethel's cheeks. Her eyes were steely and had grown very light. She had a withering sense of what the worship of mammon was costing her.

Mrs. Lorriève now sat back in her arm-chair, complacently fanning herself, her eyes fixed on a large Sévres vase and contracting with an estimate of its value. She had made herself felt and was satisfied.

Miss Lorriève became the centre of polite questions. Her manner of talking, if not effective, was correct. Two or three of the callers, each with her pet charity, concluding that the daughter was not so bad, decided to pursue the acquaintance.

Altogether, therefore, the mother had scored a

great success and at length rose, her previous assumption of importance appearing now to envelop her like a becoming mantle. It was with a perfectly cool grasp of the situation that she in some way managed to seize both of Ethel's hands, hold them for a brief instant and mention Tuesday as her day.

When she was gone and the little group of those remaining gathered closer, it was to congratulate Mrs. Grace on having discovered a new specimen.

"Don't mention her," said Ethel, in disgust. "It was her five hundred dollars. She bought me with her money,—yes, she did."

"The rest of us may find her equally useful. One can forgive such creatures if they will spend freely?" said Mrs. Upham, indifferently. "We are awfully short of funds for the Silk Weavers' Literary Union. I shall certainly call on her."

"If she had left Mr. Grace out of the question. One would think he was being fatted for the market. Fancy him dancing with—'mi darter.'"

"Oh, let him, let him," cried a young married woman. "Suppose we agree to make Miss Lorrève a belle to-night. Let us each ask our husbands and brothers to put their names on her card."

This idea so amused Mrs. Grace that, her vexation gradually vanishing, she finally entered heartily into the plan.

Meanwhile, the shadows began to gather and

the little party suddenly broke up to hurry home for dinner and an early evening nap.

A few hours later, the ladies brought together in such a sharp focus at the Grace house were scattered over the ball-room, and each one, at least when in repose, wearing the general air of good-breeding and self-poise which Paris gowns and an auspicious occasion will lend to even an ordinary personality.

From the opposite side of the large hall, Mrs. Lorriève, talking with General Tompkinson, presented an appearance of regal elegance and *savoir faire* as disproportionate to her absolute identity as photographic interiors are to the simplicity they convert into sumptuousness. In a photograph a landscape by Corot or Inniss has its equal in effect in a chromo or wood-cut. An ingrain carpet in proper lights will take the softness of an antique Tebriz rug. In a ball-room, the domed forehead of a Shakespeare, as seen through a lorgnette, is often less effective than a retreating, narrow forehead given breadth and beauty by the curling tongs and arrangement of a brainless hair-dresser. Morning for reality, evening for illusions. The spectrum analysis for the separation of a single ray of white light into all the colors of the rainbow ; evening for all the colors of the rainbow to adorn women without an atom of the harmonic unity of character symbolized by the white ray.

Mrs. Lorriève was a vast conglomeration of assorted ideas, and of these she tried now one set and then another on whomsoever she came in contact.

"Tell me, Gíneral, who that lady is, talking with a small, dark man jist opposite."

"Miss Beadle, daughter of the late Colonel Beadle, who fell in the battle of the Wilderness."

"Ah!" The clue was not yet leading enough. "She has a fine air, but I think I've niver heard her name in society."

"I dare say not. She is the down bucket at present. Ever met the lean little wiggler she is talking to?"

"No. Should I know him, d'you think?"

"He has come from the West lately. He is up in the bucket."

"They seem much taken with each other." Her shrewd eyes contracted.

"They say he was an old lover of hers."

"Perhaps they'll marry."

"Perhaps there is not enough love."

"Oh, love with such an owld thing as she is! It's a precarus foundation anyway, Gíneral. If he'll hev her, she'd better take him."

The General tilted back and forth on his feet a couple of times, looked at Mrs. Lorriève briefly, and saying,

"Miss Beadle is the kind of woman to accept

or refuse, not to be taken," he excused himself, leaving her to ponder on what he could possibly mean, but turning the queer phrase over in her mind as one presumably good to use in the future. With all her shrewdness of perception and observation she did not have the ability to convey ideas in words. She had a tremendous power, however, of converting the fruits of her observations and perceptions into acts, which is the primary distinction, after all, between the idealist and realist.

Meanwhile Miss Lorriève was waltzing with Mr. Grace, the first one of the men who had agreed together to give her a good time.

She was exceedingly light of foot. She had been carefully taught by the best saltatory masters in New York and Boston. As Ethel's full-chested and short-breathed husband glided through a difficult step with the young woman, his hand lightly pressing the supple muscles of her slender back, his feet catching a strange rhythm from hers and his eyes a contagion from hers of a queer pleasure as of wings and freedom, he made the discovery that she was a rare dancer, and as soon as they were through, his name went down on her card for another waltz later.

She was a woman with whom a man was bound to dance well if he danced at all. As Grace communicated this news to Perth Edwards, the latter soon appeased his curiosity and with the same

favorable results to the young lady. Soon her card was filled, and Mrs. Lorriève suddenly realized that this daughter's social career was to be achieved through her feet.

She wondered that she had never discovered such an easy solution before, but the truth was, that pair of feet, plebeian born, but shaped like those of Terpsichore had had their first really useful opportunity. They had been tried and not found wanting by a connoisseur.

The girl took on a vivid newness of life while dancing. There was a pulsation of color through her rich, dark skin, a fervid glow of intense physical vitality in her dark eyes that transformed her into a splendid looking creature. With health and years she might develop on her mother's lines but with a measure of refinement.

Theodore said to Ethel later in the evening: "The place for that young woman is out of doors. On a drag, in a dashing costume, she would pass for a great beauty."

During this conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Grace, Mrs. Caruthers stood not far away talking with Mrs. Adina.

The floor was now full of dancers, but thus far Naomi had been content to look on.

Alice had made up her mind to seize the occasion for displaying her friendship.

A malicious person might have said the two

ladies deliberately chose to stand there together as a mutual offset.

Naomi had lived in many countries and under the best conditions. Her features while typically racial were not offensively or prominently so, and they were imbued with much refinement and variability of expression. Their predominating characteristic was one of blended dignity and gentleness. She could easily have been mistaken for a Southerner who in manner and appearance was piquant because of a foreign education.

Her dress of pale yellow silk, whose full train was softened with a wide flounce of black lace of the finest web and pattern, fitted her superb figure perfectly. A single band of large diamonds clasped her throat like a collar. An immense bertha of black lace fell voluminously over her shoulders, meeting her long, cream-colored gloves. Her fan of yellow ostrich feathers set in jewelled ivory sticks completed a costume at once striking and simple.

Alice enjoyed her as she would a figure painting by Sargent. She was not championing Naomi through any valiant protest against prejudice. She believed, as her friend did, that the Hebrew question was virtually one of caste, perpetuated by the Jews through their refusal to marry outside their race, and that it could not be answered by their Christianization but by their extinction

through marriage into other nationalities. She simply loved and admired Naomi. Some strong affinity was their reason for being together.

While they stood there, Perth brought Millicent, radiant and slightly panting from a dance, to sit by his cousin for a few minutes. Like any man in the presence of uncommon and rarely delicate beauty he expanded in conversation with Naomi, and almost before he was aware, but with a youthful, eager impulse at once flattering and respectful, he asked her to take the floor with him.

Alice felt a peculiar satisfaction in watching the notice they excited. Naomi's motions were those of an embodied dream. Alice kept time by swaying her fan in a rhythmical, undulatory way. She could not take her eyes from the satin glow of those rounded shoulders, the curving sweep of Naomi's lashes or the sheen of the yellow gown until the dancers were lost in the crowds on the further side of the room. Then she turned to Millicent, her lips partly open, a half smile playing over her features as if she were under the witchery of music.

Millicent was sitting painfully upright like some youthful Spartan. She was exceedingly pale. Her dark eyes were set in an expression of hard scorn, pitiful and unbecoming. She was incensed almost beyond self-control that Perth should dare dance with Mrs. Adina. All her small, severe

prejudices, the depth and bitterness of which with the very young are surpassed only by those of the aged and which her education and the rather narrow, sordid views of her parents had fostered, all her paltry, vain ambitions to be identified with an exclusive circle had received a blow. She felt as humiliated as if she had found herself, against her will, in a compromising position,—to such an extent already had she unconsciously appropriated Perth. Her anger discovered her to herself. How she loved him. How she had given her heart to him, without a single reservation.

As Alice perceived Millicent's indignation, she saw a capacity for temper which made her less sanguine for her cousin than she had been. But, as Perth came in sight again, with Mrs. Adina on his arm this time, a momentary expression so childlike and hurt and loving came into the girl's face by one of those sudden revulsions of feeling women understand so well in one another, that Alice could have taken her in her arms, kissed her and coaxed away her foolish nonsense, making her generous and receptive for her lover when he returned.

Instead of finding her rested and ready to dance again, Perth felt her cold and passive. To conceal her displeasure from Mrs. Adina, he was about to propose a walk when the tension was relieved by the ubiquitous Gordon with Miss

Beadle, Mr. and Mrs. Grace and Mr. and Mrs. Darlington also converging in their direction.

At this moment, Naomi's eyes expanded with that delightful expression so becoming to a beautiful woman's face—the glad submission of love. Millicent, observing it, watched the man making his way through the crowd to the Jewess.

He was of more than ordinary height and as he stepped into the open space near the wall, a military erectness in his carriage rendered him conspicuous. His face had the intense refinement often indicative of scholarship, and this was increased by gold-rimmed spectacles which curiously served to intensify the depth and expression of his dark gray eyes.

Mr. Darlington spoke to his wife. She glanced with quickening interest at the tall, dark, distinguished looking stranger taking his place beside Naomi with a manner at once respectful and protecting. They stood regarding the new sets that were forming, her great yellow ostrich fan waving placidly to and fro. She was evidently a very happy woman.

Mr. Darlington now went forward, and an animated conversation began between the two men. Millicent turned to Mrs. Darlington—“Who is he?”

“He is the American representative of the great Jewish banking-house at Frankfort. He is also

one of the finest Hebraists in the world. Foreigners who know him say his learning is immense. Isn't it delightful to see the relation between man and wife evidently existing between Mr. and Mrs. Adina?"

A big, involuntary sigh stole from Millicent's swelling heart. She caught her breath as Mr. Darlington turned and glanced at her, perhaps through a suggestion Naomi had made. Before she was aware, Mr. Adina was being presented to her and acknowledging the introduction with that exquisite homage and dignity combined which as yet appears to be the exclusive cult of the Continental gentleman.

She found her prejudices if not suppressed, repressed. There was something dominating in those fine, strong, highly intelligent gray eyes. When Mr. Adina asked her to dance, a few minutes later, to her own profound surprise she at once consented.

They were on the floor but a few minutes. The young girl found her partner the kind of man who while dancing perfectly does so impersonally. He brought her back presently to Miss Beadle, bowed like a king, and then joined his wife who, taking his arm, bade those near her good-night.

When Naomi and her husband were in their own apartments they stood a few minutes before the fire. The tall, reticent looking man put his

arm around the lovely woman beside him.—“This is better, is it not?”

“Infinitely.” She looked up, sighing a long breath of deep content.

“That was an interesting young man I saw you dancing with, Naomi.”

“He is a very courteous, manly fellow. He loves Miss Kent.”

“Then that is why you asked me to dance with her.”

She laughed a little, satisfied, happy kind of a murmur.

“I felt you could reconcile her to me.”

“Oh, my wife, I did not think you would ever feel that sort of thing worth while again.”

“It was for the young man’s sake. I saw she might make him unhappy to-night.”

Her husband looked at her oddly for a second.

“You are always better and purer than I seem able to give you credit for being.”

Meanwhile, Miss Lorriève was adding the stamp and seal to her successes of the evening by having no less a person than Dr. Brighteck for a partner. This attention fixed her place irrevocably in Lakewood society, for the doctor, with all his simplicity and directness, had a method of appraising social values which made his verdict or attention fascinating and valuable. He had found Miss Lorriève a little vulgar in manner,

but she had a downright naïveté of intention and speech that were incorruptible.

When the mother and daughter were driving to their hotel an hour later, triumphant and elated, Mrs. Lorrière laid her broad, solidly-ringed hand in her daughter's lap and said :

"We must take a swate of rooms and give a big dinner. You are in the swim at last, Daisy. And now ye're in the middle of the stream, keep there. And, Daisy"—she leaned over; her dull, black eyes gleamed with shrewdness; "write and tell Sims it won't be convanient to see him for a couple of weeks. He has a big fortune—but so has others and more besides."

Daisy gave her mother a glance of dumb appeal from this unlooked-for change of base in regard to her "cump'ny," but she said nothing.

Perth and Millicent, again reconciled after another wordless difference, danced all thought of any one but themselves out of mind. They were delightfully aware that Miss Beadle had swamped her misgivings, her intentions and her compunctions in Mr. Gordon. They were giddily happy in escaping their respective chaperons. They were intoxicated with the last, swift, delicious toboggan-slide of passion ending in the wreck of parental hopes, vaulting personal pride and cool nineteenth-century calculation.

"Don't you want to get away from the crowd and heat, Millicent?"

"Yes, I'm suffocating." She fluttered her lace fan vigorously. Her cheeks were vivid, her eyes sparkling and languid.

He lead her out to the wide, cool corridors where a hundred other young hearts were keeping happy time to the gay music of the band. He felt as confident and victorious as the German Emperor. No need now for any more of Gordon's strange tactics. Besides, the story of threatened imbecility was in danger of falling to pieces at any moment. Gordon was meeting too many friends. He was too rich. There was a facile activity of mind that must bring home the truth to even so unsophisticated a being in nervous troubles as the healthy young girl at his side.

Up and down, up and down the long corridor they walked—no sense of fatigue in their feet, no thought of the future to disturb their present ecstasy—all the people they knew conveniently out of sight, and each beholding in the other charms till this particular night unthought of.

"Perhaps there will be fewer people in the rotunda," Perth half whispered.

"It will surely be cooler there," Millicent replied with a happy, blushing smile.

And so they went to the rotunda.

It looked big and airy. Palms and ferns and rubber trees were grouped here and there in profusion. The Japanese lanterns with their softened lights were a delightful change from the brilliant glare of the ball-room and the corridors. There was a band of four stringed pieces behind a stand of vines and flowering shrubbery, playing dreamy, delicious music.

He led the way in and out among the plants and a little apart from the open space left for the promenade.

His light shoes and Millicent's slippers made no noise.

They found a bamboo settee near the immense glass enclosure of the place. It was in an angle made by quantities of ferns banked together.

Outside the sand stretched as white as deal under the intense moonlight. Against its glow was heaped the dark shadows of the pines. Troops of feathery clouds in fantastic shapes sailed rapidly over the high blue sky.

Millicent turned a glance of mute and rapturous delight on her lover as she sank down on the settee, leaving one hand resting in the abandonment of her enjoyment on the seat. Perth sat down and took this tempting hand; her fingers closed around his in a fleeting, convulsive pressure and suddenly relaxed. Then he laid his other hand also over hers, holding it tight and unresisting.



"SHE WHISPERED IN HIS EAR 'OUR CHAPERONS!'" — Page 261.

They did not speak. They were too happy. They had crossed their Rubicon.

All at once the stillness was broken by a constrained "Ahem" on the other side of their bower.

Perth thought he detected something strangely familiar in this rudimentary sound.

Millicent rose on tiptoes and noiselessly parted the ferns. She turned back, her hand on her lips. Then crouching close to Perth she whispered in his ear, "Our chaperons!"

"Does this night remind you—ahem! of anything, Miss Beadle?"

There was a long, long silence.

"What does it remind *you* of?" came at length in tones so timid and faltering that Millicent felt she was looking into unknown depths in the staid and self-contained Miss Beadle.

"It reminds me of twenty years ago when we stood looking over a prairie at sunset and I failed to ask you a—a question."

"Why didn't you ask me?"

"I don't know—lack of courage, I suppose."

"I thought—I thought it was fault in me—or perhaps that you did not quite know your own mind."

"Oh, yes, I knew my mind."

There was another very long pause.

"Deborah!" with a touch of impatience, "won't you help me out a little? Your voice

is so impassive I can't tell yet whether there is any hope for me."

"I—I've been waiting twenty years, Dick."

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us! Oh, not from you, Deborah. Do you, do you really care a little for a lean, ugly, nervous wretch like me?"

"Oh—ah!" gasped Millicent, clasping her hands and staring rapturously at Perth—and then she whispered in his ear—so close that it was almost a kiss—"They are actually getting engaged. Let us go away."

"I won't stir till I know," whispered Perth back with determination.

"I have cared, Dick—twenty-five years."

"There's good faith and love for you, Missie," said Perth, leaning over close to Millicent who pretended to draw away. "Would you wait for me twenty-five years?"

She looked at him one brief second.

He took her hands.

"Would you?" he whispered vehemently.

"Fifty!" A proud, defiant, loving smile hovered about her lips.

He made a movement to kiss her.

She raised her hand. "'St! They are going on."

"I have been an old fool, Deborah, a consummate old fool. I have done nothing all these years but heap up riches—and dyspepsia."

"I thought it was softening of the brain," murmured Millicent.

"Threatened with it only," corrected Perth, promptly.

"But we will take the riches and surround the years that are left with comforts."

"And we love each other."

"Yes, yes; that's the main thing."

"And I'll nurse you so carefully that you will soon be well."

"We will go, darling. It isn't interesting any longer. I want my turn at making love." Perth seized Millicent's two hands, drew her to her feet, took her in his arms, kissed her eyes, her mouth, her cheeks—held her off for a long, fond look, drew her to him again, and might have continued indefinitely enjoying his turn if the ominous creaking of seats on the other side of the ferns had not made the younger lovers hurry precipitately away.

CHAPTER XIX.

THERE was an icy chill in the air the day after the ball. Towards night a long straight bank of bluish-gray cloud settled in the west. A broken uneasy wind swayed the pines. The moon rose at the full, and by nine o'clock floated in gigantic circles of weird luminosity so tenuous that the stars shone through it. Fires inside or the heaviest wraps for out-of-doors could not ward off the biting wintriness.

Ethel had sat hovering all the afternoon over a soft coal fire in her room. She was in an uneasy, nervous condition. She wished she had not stayed out so late the night before. She put her rings on and off. Her blue satin quilted gown wadded with down did not keep the chills from creeping over her. Her eyes were full of feverish excitement.

Not a soul had called on her all day long. She had a vague notion of asking Portia to visit her, but no, she couldn't do that, for Portia hadn't clothes enough to meet the kind of people whose opinion she valued ; and women not thoroughly

well-dressed, no matter how good or clever they were, bored Theodore.

Why did her husband have to go up to the city on this of all days to stay over night? He had told her the chairs in the dining-room did not please him and he must either have others made or discover some colonial relics at Cypher's or Herter's.

A maid brought in her dinner.

She ordered the table set in front of the fire. She watched the cloth laid and the soup placed before her. She tasted the broth.

"Take it away. It isn't good."

"Francis thought you would find it delectious, ma'am," said Ann, propitiatingly.

"Take it away. Put the rest of my dinner on the table and then leave me alone."

It was a very pretty, appetizing meal. There were two small chops smothered in peas. There was a delicate salad and a plate of early asparagus. A half pint bottle of champagne was at one side and a pot of aromatic tea on the other. There was an exquisite cut-glass plate of sliced Florida oranges temptingly in sight. Butter as golden as dandelions, dinner rolls on a pink china plate peeping out from a small fringed napkin, were conveniently at hand.

She leaned back in her arm-chair when she was alone and looked on the array discontentedly.

After a while she nibbled a salad leaf and ate the oranges. But things tasted insipid. She drank the tea with a grimace as if it were medicine.

Rex sat beside her contemplating the scene like a philosopher. His cinnamon-colored eyes were a little hungry, but he was a well-bred dog, thoroughly accustomed to repressing his appetites. He had himself under perfect control.

Taking one of the chops fastidiously between her thumb and forefinger she held it out. He put his head on one side, lifted the pink sides of his huge upper lip, and biting off the tender meat, left as neat a bone in his mistress' hand as if he had been a human being; then he waited with grave dignity for a second course of the same kind. Afterwards, Ethel thickly buttered a roll, feeding it mouthful by mouthful to the beautiful creature until it was quite gone.

Elevating his head slightly and seeing there was nothing left on the table he cared for, Rex stretched himself soberly on a polar bearskin rug before the fire and went to sleep.

His mistress rang to have the dinner removed.

The night came on very gradually. The moonlight grew brilliant. The room was flooded with it.

A strange, solemn haunting sense of inadequacy stole over Ethel. The high restlessness she had felt changed to a drowsy languor.

Towards midnight she dragged herself heavily

to the window. She was surprised to find the sky overcast, but the moonlight still shone through the thin layer of cloud, making everything dimly visible.

After going to bed, she fell at once into a heavy sleep. She was oppressed all night with distressing dreams.

When she awoke, it was broad daylight. Ann and Draper were bending over her with serious faces.

"Is it very late?" she gasped. She put her hand to her breast. There was a tight, uncomfortable feeling there; it hurt her to speak.

"It is nine o'clock, ma'am; I'll bring your coffee and rolls right away."

She shook her head. "I can't eat. Send for Dr. Brighteck."

The little doctor came in a very few minutes.

Ethel was now propped up in bed; her fair, fluffy hair lay in a tangle of irregular curls about her face; her thin temples were streaked with blue veins, painfully visible; her vivid lips were half-open, and each panting, short breath was raspingly audible.

"Where is Theodore?" asked the doctor.

"In New York."

"Where shall I telephone?"

She tried to speak, she tried to cough, but the

cough and the voice were unable to make themselves heard.

"Shall I send a message to him at your house?"

She shook her head. Finally by a great effort she ejaculated—"You can't find him. He has—gone—to buy chairs. He'll come—as soon as he finds them."

"Don't try to speak. I understand."

He wrote out his prescriptions, despatched one of the servants for the medicines, sent another for two trained nurses, and in an hour had transformed things to conditions as favorable as possible for the patient.

Sitting beside her to watch each developing symptom, his mind reverted to his talk in the library with Mrs. Candace, and although it was not dishes Mr. Grace was buying this time it was again something new for the house. The heaped-up luxury of Ethel's room made Dr. Brighteck tired. He went about it on tiptoes, expecting to break an ornament at each turn.

Towards noon she fell into a stupor, occasionally broken by a mild delirium during which she talked. The physician discovered a vein of thought he had not given her credit for.

"I get so sick of it all—the dinners with so much food—and the chatter, chatter, chatter. Oh, my head! Why do women scream so when they talk—Mrs. Candace and Portia don't scream."

She opened her eyes suddenly.

"Has Theodore come?"

"Not yet."

She slept again—talking brokenly. "Tell Portia not to wear them. Some beautiful new ones. A dozen pairs, two dozen pairs—all she wants." Her panting breath lifted the covering quickly up and down.

Towards night Mr. Grace arrived. Just as his carriage drove up to the door, an express wagon also came, filled with furniture.

"Where's my wife?" he asked, as the butler opened the door.

Buxton gravely said—"In her room, sir."

"Is she ill?"

"I'm afraid she's very ill, sir. Dr. Brighteck has been here all day."

The pink faded from his florid face. Tearing off his overcoat, he stole gently upstairs as if already the calamity which he and Ethel had obstinately refused to anticipate had at length arrived.

He turned the knob of her door, noiselessly. There sat the doctor. Elizabeth was there too. A nurse was holding his wife's hand.

His breath failed him. He leaned against the wall. Was that bright young life going out—even then?

Dr. Brighteck came over to him. "She is here

yet. It is all I can say. But keep up your courage. She's young. Life is on the side of the young."

Downstairs the new chairs were being huddled quickly out of sight. A pile of rugs was thrust unopened into a dark closet. The wheels of the heavy express wagon grated a few seconds on the gravelled drive, then the wide, pervasive stillness of the country brooded over the level solitude of the pines and the sullen, glossy surface of the lake. The sky was a vast, opaque, threatening expanse of pale gray. Now and then a flake of snow fluttered uncertainly to the ground. The air was lifeless with the peculiar, depressing chill preceding a great storm.

The evening shadows gathered, the cold growing more intense, the wind moaning through the piazzas and gables and swaying the pines like immense sable plumes.

A hickory fire burned on the hearth. The gas was turned down and shielded by crimson silk screens. Rex lay on the big skin rug, his nose between his paws, his eyes watchful of every movement in the room. Late in the evening he slept a few minutes, whining in his sleep. Theodore got up, took him by the collar and led him out.

"Don't allow yourself to be superstitious," whispered Dr. Brighteck. "I have seen worse cases of pneumonia."

"Do you think she will live?" eagerly.

"I can't tell. She has the vital tenacity of a delicate constitution."

"If you will pull her through, we will turn over a new leaf."

"You have said that before, Grace." The words sounded cruel, but the tone and glance were gravely tender and expostulatory.

The husband sank into a chair near the head of the bed. He sat bent over, his hands folded across his knees.

Ethel was asleep. The muscles of her cheeks were drawn. She looked prematurely old. There was now no color in her face, and it wore that strange expression peculiar to the very ill of all ages, when the story of a lifetime of suffering and experience seems engraven on the countenance. A deep seriousness, a pathetic longing and a kind of appealing sweetness lurked in the drooping corners of her mouth.

The tears began to roll down her husband's face. He wiped them away occasionally.

At midnight, Elizabeth, who had gone home for a while, returned, the doctor apprehending a crisis.

Ethel seemed to be approaching a state of collapse. Her breathing was quiet. Her eyes were sunken.

Mrs. Candace stood beside her, thinking of the pathos of life and the mystery of death. How

strange, how impenetrable the mystery surrounding the advent of a soul into human conditions, its departure to that unknown, that debatable land about which each according to his temperament formulates theories, but whose secrets none can unravel. Each one departs in his turn. None come back to give those left behind the assurance of courage, of hope, of a transition to experiences divested of the awfulness with which the departure is conditioned.

She had her own faith, her own belief, but the part of these abiding for help in extreme issues is the part growing out of personal experiences, and it is only faintly communicable.

Mr. Grace looked at her questioningly, but there was nothing to be said at such a moment. She sat down beside him and took his hand, folding it between her soft, cool palms.

A great sob rose; he suppressed it. He was in the inextricable hold of a crucial condition.

Elizabeth went to the window, and parting the heavy curtains, looked out. Here and there an electric light shot waving, fantastic gleams, leaving velvet shadows of incomparable blackness under the trees and mingling in the open spaces with the strange gray light the moon shed through the clouds.

The snow was falling. It must have come down very thick and fast for several hours. It

lay in cushiony piles on the balcony railings. The wind had dashed it in adhesive masses against the boles of the trees. The palm-like limbs of the hemlocks had gathered it as if in open hands. The shrubbery near the house, the underbrush in the woods close by, the dead vines with their shrivelled leaves, all had gathered the white harvest. Each twig, each tree, the chimneys of neighboring houses, the very atmosphere was imbued with a personality suggesting to her an intimacy with the persons and events hidden away in human habitations. How much intense percipience, what fulness of being perhaps was perpetually masked in the transparent air. How many voices were sounding on every hand audible to beast or bird or insect in a land as silent as death to the human ear. What visions were open to winged creatures of a day that were forever sealed to man.

All was mysterious. Each soul stood by itself. Hands could touch, lips could meet, there was the present comfort of human nearness, but there was also the perpetual, haunting loneliness of depths of feeling, of fragments of thought beyond the power of eye or tongue to communicate.

There was a hurried movement by the bedside. She turned from the window.

Dr. Brighteck sat holding Ethel's wrist, his

watch in his hand. A nurse stood beside him. Mrs. Candace went to the foot of the bed.

Ethel now lay with wide-open eyes. Her breathing was hardly perceptible. She looked occasionally from one to the other. Evidently she was conscious.

Her extreme fairness, her blond hair touched with a faint, sunny brightness from the gas, her parted lips, showing her white teeth, and the questioning look in her large blue eyes as she glanced languidly from one to another made a haunting picture never to be forgotten.

The minutes passed one by one. After a while Dr. Brighteck laid her hand gently down and taking a glass from the nurse inserted a teaspoonful of liquid between the patient's lips.

There was a momentary spasm in her throat, then a quietness of all the muscles—then—at last—she swallowed the medicine.

He gave her another teaspoonful.

The same failure to swallow followed, succeeded by the unknown rallying power of the vital principle.

The powerful stimulus was in her system. Nature must do the rest.

Who can describe the expression on the face of a faithful doctor at one of those critical moments when a life hangs in the balance. It is so inscrutable in its complexity. It is grave and

matter-of-fact, tender and scientific, watchful and eager. It is an expression which means instant readiness for an emergency and yet much more—as if it were indeed the summing-up of years of experience to meet the latest need.

Gradually the veined eyelids partially closed. Ethel drew a long, easy breath. Her whole body relaxed.

Dr. Brighteck drew a similar breath in sympathy.

Mr. Grace looked at him as if afraid to hear what he might have to say.

But his countenance became less tense. An expression positively happy suffused it. He looked up finally.

“There is a favorable change. You would better go to bed,” turning to Mr. Grace and Mrs. Candace, “I will stay till morning.”

CHAPTER XX.

WHEN Ethel's condition was such as to relieve Mrs. Candace of immediate anxiety, she left her hotel early one morning to make Portia a call. They had become very friendly.

There was a quality of unfailing sweetness of temper, a dogged literalness of purpose, and a kind of balanced judgment about Portia that made her confidence and friendship an acquisition.

Elizabeth felt lonely. She was a growing surprise to herself in this respect. Ever since her husband's death, cordial acquaintances rather than intimate friends had been the society that had best pleased her. But, during Ethel's illness, a craving for some tie more tangible than the passing relations which a traveller or a sojourner in hotels possesses, seized her. A home of her own, some one in it to miss her when she was away, to welcome her when she returned, to care for her if she were ill, to sit opposite her at the table and to talk with evenings when the curtains were drawn, the lamps lighted and the lonesomeness of

the night was beginning—some such arrangement seemed desirable.

There was Dr. Brighteck waiting for her—but no! To take such an intimate love as his to her heart meant too surely the absolute setting aside of a past, the memory of which was dear and always present. It meant the burial of a love of which visible expression had long ago ceased. She did not want to be absorbed by another; she wanted to be companioned.

As she walked toward Portia's, it was with no definite purpose except that of drawing Miss Max into closer acquaintanceship.

She had never called before, as they had had other frequent means of seeing each other, so it was with some curiosity that she approached the pert looking green cottage with its assertive tower.

"Yes'm—Miss Max is in," the maid said drawlingly to her inquiry.

Portia came downstairs without delay and immensely pleased with this attention. There was a responsiveness about Mrs. Candace like that of a thirsty soil to a refreshing shower.

The boarding-house parlor was full of heterogeneous people—Elizabeth's evident social inferiors—and there was much involuntary posing and constrained conversation on their part. Portia soon asked her caller to finish the visit upstairs.

Mrs. Candace was out of breath when she had

climbed the steep, winding second flight. The upper hall was so narrow that its white unpapered walls seemed to shut her in and stifle her. Some of the doors on either side were open and the chintz portières, half drawn, afforded glimpses of contracted, barren interiors, making her think of her luxurious apartments at the hotel with devout thankfulness.

Why were material comforts so unevenly distributed? Who was she that she had been born and bred in luxury, and why was she now mistress, while still young, of riches sufficient to support in comfort a half dozen families?

She sat down on the one comfortable chair the room contained and looked around. The sphynxes and pyramids in Portia's circumstances appeared to her pathetically dismal. There was an enormous Japanese umbrella suspended from the ceiling, intended for ornament but serving merely to capture the tobacco smoke of previous occupants and to give one a seasick feeling with its perpetual motion. The carpet, worse for wear, was covered with brown fern leaves; it looked somber and autumnal. The single bed with its sleazy counterpane and flabby pillows, the cheap oak furniture, glaringly yellow against the white walls, added to the feeling of isolation she had in being up so high, aroused in Elizabeth the tenderest sympathy.

"Draw your chair nearer to mine, dear, I have something to say to you."

Portia did so, and Elizabeth took her hand in a warm, loving clasp.

"I want you to do something for me, I have been so lonely the past few days. I think it must be a slight reaction now that Mrs. Grace is out of danger. I want you to come over to the 'Laurel-in-the-Pines' and spend a couple of weeks with me. Don't say no," as the younger woman hesitated, and Elizabeth, having finally overruled whatever misgivings Portia felt, it was settled that the visit should begin the following afternoon.

Mrs. Candace went away quite happy and elated. A block from the green cottage she met Bryan Mallory going towards it. As it was the last house in the row and the street ended just beyond, she divined his purpose at once.

"Are you going to see Miss Max?" she asked casually.

He looked at her with surprise. It had not occurred to him that any one's else head could be occupied with his idea.

"I am," he replied ingenuously, a slight consciousness evident in his manner. Then he asked with some eagerness: "Is she at home?"

"Yes," said Elizabeth, but thoughtfully.

He seemed suddenly to change his mind.

"May I walk with you a bit, Mrs. Candace? I want to talk with you."

"Do, please," she said.

They walked some distance in silence. All at once he stood still and she paused, too, instinctively. He looked down at her and in his embarrassment took his hat off and put it on again.

"Mrs. Candace," he said, abruptly, "I need a friend—a woman friend."

"Can I be of any service?" she inquired tentatively, the calm, clear look in her eyes at once gracious and dignified.

"I think you can. I'm—well, I may as well use the stereotyped phrase, I suppose, but I don't like it—I'm in love with Miss Max."

"Yes?" she said.

They both laughed a little, but presently it was her turn to feel perplexed, for how tenuous and uncertain all her own plans became. There was seldom any choice when the question was one between a man and woman, and she herself fancied Bryan Mallory well enough to understand that a girl like Portia might be extremely fascinated with him. The generous side of her nature asserted itself. What was her passing loneliness compared with an advantageous settlement for Portia? At least the girl should have the full benefit of this opportunity as far as her assistance was concerned—but perhaps Mr. Mallory did not

wish to be in love and looked to her to help him extricate himself. Men did sometimes expect just such ridiculous things of women. How many men she had known who wanted to be saved from themselves. Her lips curled an instant with the thought. She began to walk on. Bryan paced along beside her.

After listening to their footsteps the length of a block, she looked up with a smile inviting further confidence.

"I don't know what to do," he began, and then continued with an abrupt volubility altogether foreign to him :

"She is in that boarding-house yonder, and although I asked to call and she said I might—if I would sit on the stairs—I hardly feel like intruding on her. She doesn't want me to come there and I can readily understand it. I took her to drive—and made her so unhappy by prying into her affairs without intending to—I'm ashamed to ask her again. She had a log in a sunny place in the woods where she used to sit every day and I've dislodged her from that. You perceive I have done nothing but make blunders from first to last, and every day I find myself caring for her more. I have known scores of women—but that is quite another thing, Mrs. Candace, from meeting the first one in my life I have ever cared for—in this way."

"In what way do you mean?"

"Why, don't you know?"

"No," she said gently, but firmly, "I do not. If I am to help you, I must understand precisely your intentions."

He stood for a minute or two with his eyes on the ground. His thoughts were swinging back and forth like a shuttle. All the inertia of his nature was aroused. On the other hand his respect for Elizabeth was at this moment supreme. She had constituted herself Portia's protector. When he did look up to meet the searching candor of her gaze, it was with an expression equally frank and sincere.

"Perhaps—before meeting you—I hadn't reached ultimate intentions. I have now. I wish to marry Miss Max, if she will accept me."

Like all women of much experience, Mrs. Candace found herself profoundly interested because the old story was one of unsullied newness to this young man. She was serenely happy that her invitation had proved so opportune.

"I can help you, Mr. Mallory. I can give you the opportunity you seek of seeing Miss Max more frequently. I have just invited her to be my guest for two weeks. She is coming tomorrow. My parlor, mornings, afternoons and evenings is at your disposal. Regard me in this matter in the light of an old friend."

He held out his hand. She took it. Then he bade her good-morning and plunging into the pines started off on a long tramp.

Portia felt rather confused and excited after Elizabeth left her. Such a broad streak of pure sunshine had not fallen across her path in many a day. She was afraid such a long continued pleasure as a two weeks visit with a charming woman like Mrs. Candace would undermine her fortitude for returning to the prosaic conditions of her ordinary life. Her daily increasing desire to live according to the traditions and usages of her youth was threatening, like a leak in a dyke, to make a vast break in the plans she had soberly drawn up a year ago in favor of social renunciation. She was really seeing too much of life at Lakewood for her own good.

She got out her notes for the last one of the parlor talks. Her subject was, "The Vestal Virgins."

She read for an hour industriously on the Forum palace they occupied, the exalted reverence in which they were held, their official dignity, then she shut the book, because, after all, she felt sorry for them. It didn't seem a desirable thing to her to be such an illustrious spinster as a vestal virgin. There was a loneliness about going through life without near ties of one's own positively uncanny. She didn't believe she could utter a sen-

tence about those ancient virgins with a single dash of enthusiasm, and she had learned by experience that she herself had to have a superabundant faith in the truth and merit of what she was saying to kindle it in any one else even for the brief interval during which she was speaking.

Wouldn't there come a time when she would be thoroughly talked out? She was afraid of it. Well, she was young still—at least she was not old—and—it was spring! After the public lecture at the "Lakewood" about which Mrs. Darlington and others were making plans, there would be months in which to react towards duty.

She laid her notes on the Vestal Virgins away very much as if she were consigning those august Roman realities to the tomb, and putting on her hat and cloak went out for a walk, but with the final object to call and inquire concerning Mrs. Grace.

When she reached the hospitable looking colonial mansion, the butler was in the doorway. He answered her question about Ethel's condition by saying he would ask Draper to come down.

She passed into the drawing-room. Beyond, in the library, she heard the murmur of voices, but no one was visible. She looked around her sympathetically, for the room, while in order, lacked the vague indications of habitual occupancy. She noticed that the dust had been allowed to gather

on the banjo. Banjoes and zithers and mandolins seemed just like Ethel. She wondered if illness would ever subdue the extreme lightness and vivacity of Mrs. Grace's disposition. She picked up a rose leaf from the polished surface of a mahogany table at her elbow. There was a little circle of the fragile petals lying in undisturbed symmetry where they had fallen. How perishable, how evanescent was beauty. "The wind passeth over it and it is gone," she said to herself. Just then a laugh, the sound of a kiss, and an expostulatory "Oh, Perth!" came from the library, and the next instant Millicent and her lover stood between the portières abashed at the sudden discovery of Portia who was speechless with confusion from having overheard them.

Draper opportunely appeared to say that Mrs. Grace would be pleased to see Miss Max.

She felt a little timid about visiting any one who had been so very ill.

She went up the wide staircase, feeling thoughtful and solemn. All at once she remembered that some one had told her it was necessary for visitors to enter sick-rooms with smiling faces.

It seemed to her that her countenance must wear a horribly distorted grin, as Draper opened the door and ushered her inside.

The next instant she forgot all about "directions" and "rules for those in charge of invalids,"

for a wave of sympathetic love surged into her warm heart as she beheld Mrs. Grace.

The bed stood out in the room near the fire. On one side, much propped up, lay Ethel. The isolation of the bed seemed to isolate her. It suggested a catafalque, and her ethereal, shadowy appearance heightened this effect.

Portia knelt down beside her, taking her hand. There were no rings on it. The little bones made ridges in the waxy flesh. The long, handsome nails looked brittle and purple.

Portia kissed the small, thin hand and a tear fell on it.

A brief, wondering smile of gratification passed over the sick woman's face. No one but Theodore had shed a tear for her through all those days of mortal suffering. She had had an occasional wistful regret that no one beside her husband was very sorry. She was discovering in unthought-of ways how utterly selfish her life had always been and that the greatest luxuries of feeling are something neither money nor power can buy.

"Thank you for that tear, Portia."

She lay silent for awhile.

"All who come in to see me are so extraordinarily bright. They tell me, too, that I look almost well. I get Draper to give me the hand-glass sometimes—and I know how I look. I have

been very ill, Portia. I did almost die this time—and it has made a difference with me. There, take that chair and turn around so that you can face me. Let me hold your hand. I made Draper read the Bible to me a few minutes last night. She read about the ten talents. If I have any, it isn't more than half a one—but I am going to use it, when I get up, for other people."

Portia did not say much in reply. There was little that could be said. Ethel had been rampantly, ostentatiously selfish and indolent always. It was the standard joke in her conversation. She had even warded off criticism by proclaiming her weaknesses while indulging them to the utmost.

"Where are you going this summer, Portia?"

"I don't know, yet."

"We shall start for the Engadine as early as it will be prudent for me to go. Poor Theodore! Have you seen him? He is actually pale. Although it is becoming, I do not like to see him pale. He has been so good. I have been trying to think what I could do to please him when I am stronger; but, Portia, my thought just stagnates when I try to think of anybody but myself—it is so new to me. The pity of it all is I have never been ashamed of it before. The reason I asked you where you are going was because if you haven't made any plans I wanted to know if you wouldn't spend the summer with me?"

"Oh, Ethel, I would never suit you in the world—never!" and Portia squeezed her hand.

"Yes, you would. I have always liked you more than you can understand. They say I talked about you in my delirium. You need not decide to-day—not for a month. But think it over. I do want you to go with me very, very much."

Draper now came in with a cup of broth, and Portia went downstairs and out of the house without meeting any one.

Life, with its homely duties, aspirations if but half fulfilled, an earnest purpose if unachieved seemed worth while. She thought she might have considerable enthusiasm in her talk the following day on the Vestal Virgins, after all.

When Elizabeth reached her rooms she was in that delightful frame of mind which only a thoroughly benevolent nature can understand. She was studying ways and means for temporarily obliterating herself. She was one of those women who cannot stay even in a hotel long without surrounding themselves with many of the small comforts and refinements of a home.

She occupied herself at once, therefore, in fitting up Portia's bureau, table, mantel and chairs with her own pretty belongings. To do so she reduced her own room to bare necessities. When she led the young girl the next day to the pretty

chamber in such attractive readiness, she was repaid by the exclamation of delighted surprise springing to Portia's lips.

"Oh, how sweet it all looks! I haven't had a room like this since"—and she threw her arms about Elizabeth's neck and burst into tears.

"Flowers, too—flowers everywhere!" she exclaimed, going eagerly to the window-seat on which stood a tall, ruby-colored vase of bridesmaids. "Oh, Mrs. Candace, to think you got these for me!" She picked up the vase and under it saw Bryan Mallory's card. "Oh!"

"I chanced to tell Mr. Mallory, dear, that you were coming. He left the roses at my door a little while ago for you. You see your eloquence has captivated him."

"You make me ashamed of myself. He told me the other day eloquence was the rarest of all modern gifts and bewailed the fact that he had not listened to a single strain in years. However, the flowers are beautiful, aren't they." She inhaled their fragrance. Her eye sparkled and there was a kind of happy tumultuousness about her which Elizabeth thought augured well for Bryan.

"Have you ever heard any of the great public lecturers among women, Portia? I am going to call you Portia. I used to when you were a little girl."

"You will be ever so kind to do so. No, I

have never heard one. I have dreaded hearing them for fear I should find my little rushlight hopelessly extinguished."

"You would only feed its flame."

"It certainly needs better illuminating qualities."

"The charm about those women," continued Elizabeth, "is their naturalness. When I listen to Mrs. Livermore or Mrs. Lathrop, I am lost in what they say in exactly the same way as I am in Patti's vocalization or the religious harmony of Materma's voice."

"I notice by to-day's paper that Miss Willard and Lady Somerset are to speak in New York to-morrow night," said Portia wistfully.

"Are they? We will make up a party and go to the city to hear them. Dr. Brighteck is a great believer in all this sort of thing—and I am sure Mr. Mallory will be, if he isn't. I'll write a note to them this instant. Here are some of the latest magazines. Amuse yourself while I am at my desk."

She sat down at one of the windows with a lapful of the periodicals.

Mrs. Candace's rooms were only one story up, and were therefore near enough to the ground for Portia to distinguish everything. She watched the passers by with a sheltered feeling.

Presently Mr. Mallory came through the pines

and across the drive. He looked up when opposite her window.

His bow had an excess of good will, even of gallantry. A sudden throb of her heart was followed by a tingling satisfaction, and with it came a grateful yet exultant feeling that she could meet him on his own ground.

She had had several lovers in her life-time. She was not unsophisticated, but her present incredulity as to her attractiveness in general ways with the conditions of her life so altered amounted to unsophistication. She insisted on misinterpreting to herself Bryan's evident inclination—he was sympathetic. He bore with the lectures to encourage her. He liked to talk to her because she was somewhat outside of the conventionalities hemming in most women. But the flowers forced her to absolutely face a possible relation which in the depths of her secret soul she knew existed. Even Mrs. Candace's matter-of-fact assumption that she had merely to ask him in order to have him accompany them held something delightful suspended in the way of an intimacy only waiting for a chance to grow.

“What do you find interesting?” asked Elizabeth, looking up. “What, not reading? I shouldn't think you would want to. You must feel surfeited with books. There!” sealing the second letter. “If the men are in the hotel, I

dare say we shall have answers in ten minutes. I know they will be delighted to go."

Meanwhile Bryan Mallory on reaching his room found a letter postmarked Utah. It proved to be an acceptance, from a small college in that state, of his entomological collection, with the promise couched in ornate and grateful language to name the room they were having fitted up to receive it, "The Mallory Cabinet of Eastern Insects."

"Good-bye to this hobby," he said, radiantly, clasping his hands behind his back and walking briskly up and down. "I'll have them shipped the very first thing. I'll take up something telescopic the next time."

He went to a case a minute after, a smile lingering about his mouth, and set aside the two dried specimens of moss presumably containing the microscopic wonders which had reminded him of Portia. He had just seated himself at the table to see if he could still find them, when he noticed another letter slipped under his door.

It was Mrs. Candace's invitation.

He began to have a realizing sense of her cleverness and good will as he read it. He had never heard a woman speak, before listening to Portia. He now accepted this new situation with a passing thought of how large a man's tolerance is of anything that will further his progress in winning the woman he has set his heart on.

"I'll call at her rooms and answer in person, after dinner," he said to himself.

He wondered if Elizabeth would invent some pretext for letting him see Portia alone. He was exuberantly willing to take every advantage she might offer, even if she turned herself out of doors for him. He was like the common type of man in love—aggressively selfish.

When he called a couple of hours later, the two ladies had come up from dinner and Bryan saw the now familiar black dress with its red spots with a thrill of delight. Miss Max had tucked a couple of his roses in her bosom.

He assured Mrs. Candace that he had been wanting to hear Miss Willard and Lady Somerset all winter, but had been prevented hitherto, and that nothing could possibly give him more pleasure than to listen to these now world-famous women. Privately he was thinking how delightful it would be to have Portia in the seat with him on the journey to the city and hoping the lecturers would appear strident and radical so that she would experience a stultifying reaction against all such functions either public or private.

Portia felt in a singularly elated state. She had finished the parlor course of her talks that morning. She had bidden good-bye to the tower-room and the Japanese umbrella in the afternoon. The sphynxes and pyramids, emblems of her soli-

tude and gravity, were stored in the bottom of her trunk. Her public lecture at the Lakewood was far enough away at the distance of ten days to appear mythical. She was only just beginning the delightful visit which still seemed like a dream. She had won a new and dear friend in Mrs. Candace—and—yes—she was going to see more of Mr. Mallory, the very thought of whom was dangerously pleasant.

She knew, the instant she laid her hand in his and took one brief glance into his eyes, that the question had been settled on his side, and with what amounted to a brief spasm of consternation and rapture blended, she cast a glance into her tumultuous heart, but turned away from what she saw there, afraid to decipher it to the uttermost.

They all sat down around the fire with a fine showing of general acquaintanceship.

Bryan sedulously devoted himself to Mrs. Candace, addressing just enough of his conversation to Portia to neither permit her to feel left out or made conspicuous. But, whenever his eyes sought hers, as they did frequently, she felt the mustering of all her forces to withstand a surrender.

When they had been talking a half hour, Dr. Brighteck came in, but he wouldn't sit down ; he merely welcomed Portia as if she were the loveliest woman in the whole world, and then turning to Elizabeth, said :

"I have just come from Ethel. She wants to see you desperately. Don't you think you could step over to her cottage with me? Miss Max will take Mallory off your hands for a little while. Mallory, you will take care of Mrs. Candace's guest till we come back, won't you?"

"I'll take care of her with pleasure."

He said this with unconscious unction.

When Dr. Brighteck and Elizabeth went away a few minutes later, the color had not faded from Portia's cheeks, and her eyes had a restless, defiant sparkle provocative to a man of Bryan Mallory's intensity of purpose, now that it had been finally and effectually aroused.

The faith of women in men they admire is often sufficient to move mountains; but the principle of exchange, of barter, or of equivalents, has its esthetic expression in most men in their attitude towards women. Bryan began quite unconsciously to prove anew to himself, by indirect methods in his conversation, how very unusual a woman Portia was, and how lucky he would be to win her. In this way, by a subtle reflex play upon his own sensibilities, he intensified his love, which was in reality sincere and manly enough to suit any woman.

There was a quality at once soothing and exhilarating about his personality to Portia.

The color gradually faded from her clear olive

skin. The rather tense lines of her sensitive mouth relaxed. Her expression was full of that trust which, if it be wholly the work of nature and not in the least the device of fine social art, makes the plainest woman look like a saint.

"There is a damp east wind blowing steadily to-night and I look for a storm to-morrow. I suppose Mrs. Candace will want to go, rain or shine?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes, indeed. We wouldn't miss the opportunity even if a blizzard came."

"What are these women going to talk about?" he asked, rather lazily, and watchful of Portia.

"They are women with missions; that dignifies anything they have to say."

"Missions?"

"Yes. 'W. C. T. U.'s' and all that sort of thing."

"I don't understand."

She laughed. "You remind me of how vexed I once got with a very entertaining man who lent me some stupid books. One was filled with poems addressed to O. M. and C. X., and all the other letters in the alphabet. Another was written by W. Q., and the third was signed D. I hate to hear 'Y. M. C. A.' for Young Men's Christian Association—but then, you know," she sighed in mock discouragement, "this is an age of brevities. It has struck me as so odd that most

men correspond even with their wives by telephone."

"What does 'W. C. T. U.' mean?"

"Don't you really know?"

"I see those letters, of course, constantly, in the papers, but I also see quotations about the 'P. L. S.' and 'A. F. F. R.' As I haven't stock in that particular alphabetic combination, I have never had time to find out what it means?"

"If you and I were young enough to begin our education again, we would have to give a year to abbreviations. As it is, we shall never catch up. And so you don't know what 'W. C. T. U.' means?"

"Oh, about, of course, but, having a scientific bent, I like to be precise, even in definitions. I know that Miss Willard and Lady Somerset lecture on temperance, and so, by means of hard guessing here on the spot, I presume the letters stand for 'World's Coming Temperance Unification.' Am I right?"

She assured him he was.

He was pleased she was not desirous of rectifying him. He had a wholesome horror of women who corrected the minutiae of conversation. Considering the Roman Antiquities, he had rather feared she might reveal a mania for a small type of knowledge along the lines of the dictionary and encyclopædia.

“ I’ll tell you what we must do to-morrow afternoon. The doctor can drive Mrs. Candace in his brougham to the station, and I’ll take you up in a new trap I have been having made—a small, light affair, something like a hansom only much more so—and you can tell me what you think of it. I don’t believe any vehicle ought to pass till it has been judged by a lady.”

She expressed her pleasure with a pretty alacrity, and went to the window to look out.

The electric lights made the threatening night visible. They cast lurid gleams upon the lake, shining in inky blackness here and there through the pines. The world looked sinister and evil. Storm and wind, darkness and cold, were like powers of the air seeking to invade the snugness of their luxurious interior.

She drew back, wrought upon by her own fancy.

Bryan had not been looking out of the window. He had been watching her. The play of feeling and imagination over her expressive features dominated his calmer nature. He longed to take her in his arms right there and tell her that no tempest, either of the night or circumstances, no cruelty of care or sorrow should ever touch her without first assaulting him.

She saw something of his thought and desire as she turned suddenly, and confusedly tried to part the curtains.

"I'll open them for you," he said, gently.

After that they did not talk with the same lightness and ease. Portia became the listener.

Gradually Bryan exerted himself, and she discovered what a really charming talker he could be. He told her odd stories about bridges and light-houses, he gave her his own theories about æronautic navigation, and every subject was just enough lighted with a play of humor to stir her imagination and allow her to invest those depths attributed to most quiet people with fascinations that would have alarmed him could he have known what extravagance they were attaining in her mind.

The evening was advancing and Mrs. Candace had not returned.

When another long, delicious silence fell upon them, Bryan regretfully and with more cunning than he would have given himself credit for a month ago, decided to leave in order to impress on Portia a last memory suggestive of his regard.

He got up rather abruptly. She felt powerless to ask him to stay. She had not even thanked him for his flowers. So, as he held out his hand and she took it, she said: "They were very beautiful, those roses."

"I noticed when I came in you were good enough to wear a couple. Thank you."

His eyes met hers a second—squarely.

She looked away instinctively. In another moment he had gone.

She sat down before the fire to enjoy the pleasure of a solitude filled with his personality. She did not dare think of him in direct ways. The possibilities were so full of overwhelming sweetness. Perhaps, after all, this veiled tenderness, a confidence which seemed so warmly personal—perhaps it was his manner with any woman he trusted, and she was sure that, at least, he trusted and liked her.

She was glad, a few minutes later, to have Mrs. Candace's return send her vagrant fancies into the background.

"I did not intend to stay so long," she said, apologetically. "I hope you will forgive me and that Mr. Mallory did not prove tiresome. I like him immensely, myself. Suppose we go to bed immediately. I am very weary and I am sure you must be."

She talked rapidly in order to leave Portia nothing to say—walking, meanwhile, with her arm around the younger woman, towards the pretty chamber she had so lovingly fitted up.

She went inside, looked around to see if everything were in readiness, and then, folding Portia to her heart with something sisterly and motherly at once in the embrace, said good-night.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE following day was stormy. The rain fell with a downright, cheerful steadiness which left no doubt of its intention to continue.

There was a cessation at noon and the clouds broke a little. A straggling ray of sunshine crept forth, but the clouds joined again and a quiet drip, drip, set in which had not abated when it was time to start for the city.

An east wind was blowing. It came in from the sea saturated with salt, and the penetrating, yet exhilarating, dampness characteristic of coast storms.

Dr. Brighteck and Mrs. Candace were ductile. They acquiesced in Bryan's off-hand proposition about the carriages.

The little doctor was never happier than during the rare occasions when he was alone with Elizabeth. Their brief ride to the station had a reflected suggestion of intimacy from the fact that a pair of possible lovers was following closely behind.

There is more peace, if less exaltation, in negative conditions oftentimes, and Dr. Brighteck, as long as Mrs. Candace remained single, could

wait cheerfully, and with an indefinite hope centring about a remote future, which did not interfere with the diversified currents of his accustomed thought or break into the routine of his daily habits.

Unaware of the depth of his patience, she continued to enjoy her friend, once a lover, without a qualm of conscience.

As they drove along the streets, however, the windows of the brougham cloudy with the dampness, the patter of the incessant rain on the roof, a fur rug tucked closely over them, and the landscape dreary in its monotonous, level solitude, she dreamily felt the comfort and cheer of a companionship so congenial and unobtrusive. The thought floated through her mind, but vanished as it came, of how unreasonable she was with possibly a long life before her to hold aloof from one who would give her so much and demand so little. But aloofness is a condition of feeling after all; it is not a state into which a woman deliberately enters.

Elizabeth had taken life as it was made for her, moulding her conduct accordingly. She had accepted hard conditions uncomplainingly, and she, more than any one else, unless it were Dr. Brigh-teck, candidly regretted her incapacity for the old girlish impulsiveness of feeling which is a luxury in itself. She too, however, had a vague expecta-

tion that perhaps in a very indefinite future she might draw nearer to this thoroughly loyal and delightful friend ; at least—now that she was back again in her own land—they must necessarily see much of each other.

“ I wonder what they are talking about,” she said, with a motherly smile sitting prettily on her young face, as she threw her head back in the direction of Bryan and Portia.

“ I wonder if that new trap will keep Miss Max from getting wet,” said Dr. Brighteck, laughing. “ We are facing the storm and there is enough wind to drive the rain right in on them. I never saw a man yet who could be in love and matter-of-fact at the same time. You would have thought Mallory, though, different from the common run. I would like to know how life looks to her at this moment.”

“ There is a glow along the horizon which she sees but insists on misinterpreting. She dare not face the fact of a sunrise for herself yet.”

“ There will have to be a grand outburst sooner or later. It might take a luminary as deliberate as Mallory, though, a whole season to warm a distant planet like Miss Max.”

“ I am not so pessimistic. The merest accident, such as a clearer perspective than usual growing out of opportunity, will suddenly awaken her. The next best thing, doctor, to being in love, is

to help other people in love. You and I must help Mallory and Portia."

He gave her a passing, wistful glance. "All right," he replied.

Meanwhile, notwithstanding the hood of the hansom projected more than usual in such a vehicle, and notwithstanding the apron was drawn up to its utmost extent, the wind did blow the rain so drenchingly in Portia's face that Bryan bethought him of his umbrella. This he held before her with a cosy sense of protecting her.

The wind, getting in on the side, occasionally, blew the end of her veil over his face. It was deliciously scented with violet.

If one of the short locks on her forehead, curling up in little spiral rings, from the dampness, had touched his cheek, he could not have thrilled more with the contact. The delicious, evanescent perfume let him know what flowers to run out and buy for her as soon as they reached their hotel.

Meanwhile, those earnest eyes were so near his that he could look right into their honest depths. They were bright now with the gayety of spirit settling down upon her like an atmosphere; but there was a wistful, patient sadness in them, also, telling that the cup of bitter experience had already met her lips.

It was this quality of multiplied experiences united to conditions of purpose and effort, as yet

foreign to him, but which she had met heroically, that made her so lovable to him. So he thought. There was also an attractiveness about her, growing out of ardent sympathies lying near the surface, as well as a delicacy of sentiment, that kept her on a supremely high level to his imagination. He was gradually finding out that a true and reverent love for a woman places a man's being on an axis that greatly increases its orbit.

The train was one uniquely and providentially provided for this journey, so it seemed to Bryan.

Instead of the usual cars with their wide seats and spacious aisles, it was made up of a series of old-fashioned ones with short, high-backed seats, each having a small-paned window through which only a patch at a time of the landscape was visible.

The car they entered was nearly full, so that the doctor and Mrs. Candace had to take a seat at the rear end, while they were at the other.

How snug and shut in to him she looked with that little window beginning only at her shoulder. What a nice seat it was with its boxy properties. How thoroughly suitable that there was no one but the blank, automatic conductor to disturb their vision. Did ever the hollow rumble of the wheels over the wet rails chime with a man's undefined longings or present satisfaction more thoroughly? Did ever pines with their dense, green spreading tops look before like umbrellas

nature had opened all along the route in case of possible accident? And the sand dunes—with their ever-changing forms, fickle and pliable as the hungry, moody, passionate sea caressing them one moment and tearing them asunder the next; there was something positively, radiantly smiling in their yellow heaps.

Sitting there beside him in that small enclosure, Portia had a comfortable sense of their isolation. Sometimes she looked out of the small high window at the cheerless stretches of rank grass on which the rain froze as it fell; or her eye fastened on meagre cottages on which the paint looked dingy in the dim atmosphere; or, as the train roared through the cuts whose sodden, yellow banks encroached on either side, it seemed as if they might forever shoot forward into space with nothing to seize their vision outside and nothing within to distract them from each other.

But by and by they came nearer the sea. They began to glide over the long trestles. They heard the heavy, hopeless dash of an occasional breaker as if it brought with it from afar the consummation of an unknown tragedy. They saw the mysterious reach of fog shutting down upon the ocean.

The outside world was hauntingly lonesome; but inside, within that homely car, were warmth and a near presence of which each became more and more conscious as the journey proceeded.

After they reached the city, there was no further opportunity for these suggestive isolations, and it was doubtless well, if Portia were to get any clear idea of the women whom she had come to see and hear.

She was in an excited state of expectation while sitting in their box near the stage of the opera house. Mrs. Candace and she were in front.

She leaned over occasionally to take in the full extent of the parquet at a glance. She fairly gasped at the view she gained of thousands of men and women solidly filling the great space to the doors; of other thousands occupying the boxes and soaring galleries; of the large company crowded on the stage till its utmost capacity was taxed.

How mysterious the small doors on either side of the rostrum looked. She watched them with the fascination she had felt when some great singer was about to issue from them. They were opened at intervals and women came out. She became aware that the speakers of the evening must be there in actual flesh and blood before her.

Elizabeth leaned over, pointing one after another out.

"I think, dear, there is one thing you ought to keep in mind. You have come, you know, to hear how they speak, and you must not let yourself get carried away with what they say. The mere art of speaking is a great accomplishment

which you want to study. Do you see that rather stout lady at the right? She is Mrs. Mary Lathrop. She has a voice like a sweet-toned bell and a power of sarcasm allied to a logical faculty—all which she carries off in such a happy, off-hand manner that if you are not careful you will completely forget yourself and listen to her exactly as if she were telling a thrilling story. You must not forget yourself, for you are here to criticise these women as speakers. Notice that lady sitting on the farther side—the one in a shawl and a poke bonnet. Look at the straight line of her temples and cheek—so straight that you could lay the palm of your hand flat against it. Notice her full eyelids and high, thoughtful forehead. Isn't her face the embodiment of purity, reticence and benevolence? She is Mrs. Hannah Pearsall Smith. The one quite near is Lady Somerset. Her features are rather heavy but mobile. Doesn't she sit well? She looks even better when she stands. She makes one have a little patience with the British Aristocracy—although I never saw a woman more American in the sense of being 'advanced' than Lady Somerset is. The woman beside her is Frances Willard. Miss Willard is intensely magnetic, so you will have to hold yourself well in hand also when you hear her. That rather short, florid, executive-looking woman is Mrs. Ellen Foster. She is

blended physical and mental dynamite whom one would better not stir up unless he expects to be blown to pieces."

"Isn't it odd and wonderful," said Portia, "that we have lived to see this day? They are all middle-aged or old, aren't they? I am rather surprised and ashamed of my stupidity in not having taken their maturity for granted. I have always thought of them as young. I might have known it took time to evolve such women."

"That notion of yours, I suspect, is a survival of the time when woman was considered solely in the light of her eligibility to marriage. Marriage of course, is the best state for most of us. Nearly all these women speakers are married."

"They are going to begin," said Portia, with a thrill of excitement.

The next moment the vast assemblage was called to order.

Portia Max could never tell how the time went during those two hours she sat there. But when Bryan left the box enthusiastic over the speakers, the little woman beside him felt like a moth with singed wings. She was mentally enumerating what she called her stage properties and she found herself woefully lacking. To speak in a drawing-room was something so different from filling a vast auditorium with tones compelling attention and respect, and that were neither forced

nor unpleasant. To marshal a long, carefully wrought out argument on some tremendous vital question meant an expenditure of force and the outcome of thought, experience and conviction which removed her small efforts as far from this plane as a Swiss music-box is from that of the mighty organ of Strasburg.

She had entered the opera house buoyant with expectation; she left it with a sense of how rudimentary her outfit for a professional life was, and a clinging, frightened desire to get behind some power larger and stronger than herself as a shield against the vicissitudes of life.

When they stepped out on the pavement to find that the storm had cleared and the stars were shining brilliantly while a crisp, frosty air touched their faces, they decided to walk back to their hotel.

Portia and Bryan started off at a brisk pace.

Soon the crowd was behind them and they felt almost alone in the great city.

They did not talk much.

Whenever Portia did speak, Bryan looked down at her with a tense, steady tenderness which thrilled her as nothing had ever done before.

And Bryan, through that subtle transference of thought and feeling taking place between two people when they are drawing near together, became aware that the hope he was cherishing was making a foundation for itself.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IF Portia's lecture at the "Lakewood" had been a drama and the acting had been done by others, it would have been called a benefit, for the men and women interested in her parlor talks were substantial contributors as well as indefatigable canvassers for this public one which many hoped was effectually to launch her on a career.

Her friends and well-wishers made a point of eulogizing her. As the time drew near, the impression became general to the uninitiated that they were to listen to a prodigy.

Fortunately, she was only dimly aware of the many good-natured efforts in her behalf or of the general sympathy of scores who had been approached through their benevolence.

But Mallory knew about everything, and for the first time in his life he suffered vicariously. He had his fist doubled repeatedly with the impulsive intention to strike out flat as he heard men speak of the lecture as of a mission, and as a new way of squeezing money out of them. He simply maintained silence as he heard the women gleefully

rehearse the manner in which they had approached this one and that one—" Making him take ten or twenty tickets, although knowing he didn't want to."

The women showed better lists than the men.

Every one who went to Mallory received a subscription almost before she had a chance to explain.

When the committee on the lecture met in final session and compared notes, it was found that he had given just one-half of the amount subscribed. A distressing silence fell upon them, and then there was a general smile at their own expense accompanied by a perception that they had discovered a bonanza for their charities.

Finally a gossiping query was raised as to whether Mr. Mallory was in love with Miss Max.

"In love!" exclaimed a lady, contemptuously. "He couldn't fall in love with her. It is pure generosity. Everybody is interested in giving her a start who knows about her father and the way he lost his fortune, through no fault of his own."

"Yes, it is simply generosity," said another. "In fact, the young man told me that if the subscriptions fell short of our expectations, to call on him for the balance. I think he is lovely. He always does anything I want him to."

"We are never going to get twelve hundred

people to come," said a pensive woman, shaking her head lugubriously. "That will make her feel bad. She will want to think she has really earned this nice little sum."

"Oh, she won't care, if she only gets the money. I wouldn't," said a flat-faced woman with an extensive mouth and throwing off a sable cape. "It's money Miss Max needs and what she is thinking about."

Meanwhile, Portia spent the mornings in severe study and vocal exercises to strengthen her voice. The afternoons and evenings were full of plans on Mrs. Candace's part by which Mallory had all the opportunities his growing capacity for her parlor needed. Every day that brought the lecture nearer brought him closer to an avowal he withheld from making only lest Portia did not yet fully know her own heart. But he was savagely bent on preventing her from giving another lecture, if it had to be based on such preliminaries as those of this first one.

Elizabeth found him one evening pacing up and down a deserted corridor. His brow was wrinkled and his step was nervous. When he saw her he caught on to her society eagerly.

"I don't like all this fuss about raising money one bit, Mrs. Candace. I would have given the whole sum cheerfully to save the canvassing and the rehearsal of the poor girl's life and ability."

"Oh, you must not lay too much stress on such matters. It is the way things are managed nowadays. First, it is influence and money, then it is success. If one hasn't her own money or influence, she is fortunate in getting a hold on those of others in a legitimate way. Portia doesn't know anything of all our small anxieties for Wednesday morning. If the child did, she would be stricken dumb. Those who gave her this start will have forgotten it in a month. It will be simply one of the subscriptions of the year to them."

"I don't like it," repeated Bryan, emphatically. "I don't mind her lecturing. She has got the talent for it. She's got more talent for everything than any woman I ever met. Excuse me, Mrs. Candace, but she is a wonderful girl. I don't like, either, having her wear her brains out on building up a neat little set of proofs about the Gauls being the regenerators of Rome after its fall. Who cares a straw about the Gauls or Rome to-day. She ought to be in league with those women we heard in New York who are working for a cause. They are the givers. They don't want anything of anybody for themselves. It is too much like a business. I mean it smacks of charity. To think of a Max helped along by subscriptions! Why didn't you, Mrs. Candace, just ask me right out for the money needed?"

"But the money was returned to the subscribers in tickets—and tickets mean an audience. You and I know that Portia will return a full equivalent," she added reassuringly.

"You could have given the tickets away."

"It never would have done. We had to get people interested, and the way to do it was through their pockets. All who bought the tickets will either come or see that somebody else goes. There will be six hundred there anyway. Portia will be like a somnambulist. She will appear to see the crowd in front of her, but in reality her mind will be turned inward. She will not suffer after she has begun to speak."

"Well," said Bryan, in tones midway between a grunt and a groan, "she shall never do it again if I have the right to prevent it—never! I only wish I could have gotten her to accept me a month ago and she should never had done it this time."

Elizabeth laughed a little soothingly, and tried to show him the benefit Portia was deriving.

"The effort will be a means to higher culture. If she continues she will really become learned on certain subjects. She is acquiring concentration of thought and self-control."

"She has so much now that she is strung up like a piano at concert pitch. What she needs is relaxing—and—if she will—if she does take me—she

shall have it—twenty years of it if she wants them. I'll be the one to take the culture if it is so beneficial. I am about the laziest dog on this earth. Portia has made me ashamed."

"Now don't you see," said Elizabeth convincingly. "She would not be Portia to you unless she had lectured and studied—and—evolved into the perfectly adorable woman you love."

"She shall never do it again—never! Think of the criticisms afterward. I lie awake nights composing them."

"To-night is the last, for the present. You needn't be afraid for her. She is beautifully ready. She has recited the lecture to me so many times that even I know it by heart."

The night passed away, the morning dawned, and at eleven o'clock Portia found herself walking down the hall of the "Lakewood" toward the ball-room between Elizabeth and Mrs. Darlington. The other members of the committee were already gathered, and first one and then another said a word of encouragement. They all wore an innocent, triumphal air as if they were crusaders returning from victory. Then they scattered through the room to overhear how the lecture should be received and to make estimates of the number present.

Portia thought she should never forget the particular personal stare of the placard hanging

outside the ball-room door or how its brazen face seemed to shout at her

“LECTURE!

BY

MISS PORTIA MAX

ON

THE GAULS, THE SAVIORS OF ROME,

AFTER ITS

DOWNFALL.”

Finally she was seated on a very straight chair beside a table. There was a pot of flowers blooming on the table. A couple of books lay rigidly beside the flowers. She put her MS. opposite the books. Then she laid it in her lap.

Discovering her chair to be so high that the MS. was slipping, she fancied what it would be to have it fall to the floor, a vagrant breeze seizing the pages and blowing them everywhere. She laid it back on the table with a smothered sense of having barely escaped a catastrophe.

At length it was time to begin.

She had an intense vision of Naomi and Alice, Ethel and Mrs. Darlington, Mrs. Candace and Dr. Brighteck. Each looked as if she were already the greatest living oratorical wonder.

A thrill shot through her. It strung every muscle as if she had seized a battery. Her knees

trembled. A spasmodic twitching beginning in one of her hands, she glued it to her side.

All at once she saw nothing but eyes—eyes everywhere — hundreds of them — unthinking, staring, searching eyes !

She fancied herself an Indian giving one blood-curdling, shrieking whoop and dashing from the room, off through the town, into the woods, on to the sea—away, away from those myriad eyes coming closer and closer.

This cyclone of sensation occupied seconds ; then she began.

Soon she saw no one. She forgot the manuscript. She had no feeling. The lecture was before her mind like an illuminated scroll from which she was reading. She turned her head mechanically to the right and left from habit because in the rehearsals Elizabeth had told her she must look all around while speaking.

In due time she saw the last sentence on the scroll. She repeated it.

She stood a moment with a strange relieved wonder that she had gotten through. She felt a little blindly behind her for a chair. She found it and sank down. The blood rushed to her face. It receded. All at once she seemed to be awake.

There was a great crowd of the “subscribers” pressing around her. Men and women shook

hands. One gentleman told her her "effort was very instructive." Another assured her that the position of those ancient Gauls in history was clear to him for the first time. A beaming, smiling woman whispered flatteringly: "I kept awake from beginning to end, although I always sleep at lectures," and a thin, white-haired old lady, said, "Child, how tired you must be!"

But, as lectures go, the resurrected Gauls notwithstanding, Portia's public effort was declared a brilliant success among her friends, and the next morning the New York papers, in the notes from "Winter Resorts," devoted from four to six lines each to statements of the numbers present and the proceeds.

Two or three reporters called at the "Laurel-in-the-Pines." Elizabeth prudently saw each one, and when they asked for particulars concerning the childhood of Miss Max, she led off with such enthusiastic eulogies of their respective journals that they forgot what they had come for till after she had bowed them politely out.

In the evening Bryan called. Portia looked at him anxiously. She had not seen him since the night before. She was afraid, if he had heard her, he had left without speaking to her because he was thoroughly disgusted.

She made two or three tentative approaches toward the subject occupying her thoughts, but,

either he did not understand her, or did not wish to do so.

Instead, he seemed to be in a very desultory frame of mind, and talked a great deal about various people they were in the habit of meeting.

He gave her the history of the Lorrièves.

She was amazed at his detailed knowledge concerning everybody.

He called Mrs. Lorriève a broker who used the organized charities as a social stock exchange. He mentioned two or three men forever at her beck and bidding — naming Millicent's father among them.

"You astonish me!" exclaimed Portia. "I thought the Kents were on a perfectly independent footing socially, now they are so rich."

"That is all true in a way," said Bryan, "but Mr. Kent got his wealth by using Lorriève as a prop. Mrs. Lorriève does not mean to let him forget it, either. She has been calling on Miss Kent, so Mrs. Caruthers says, and the girl is in a state of high dudgeon over it."

"She need not return the call," said Portia, contemplatively.

"Oh, no, she needn't, but she will. It is the way with merely rich people. Society wears a purely business aspect to them."

Portia began to feel astonished and distressed.

Bryan had never before gotten down to a flat level of gossip.

"There are the Adinas," he continued; "they have more general culture, brains, and money combined than half the people one meets—and sensible men and women are afraid to enjoy them—because they have a genealogy, I suppose. I have crossed the ocean twice with Adina, and had business dealings with him, too. He is a capital fellow and as square as a compass. That Edwards has touched his fancy. Edwards is going to have an offer from the banker before he leaves here. It will quite place the young man on his feet. I am awfully glad, for he has plunged into an engagement with Miss Kent, and there may be trouble ahead for both when Kent père gets back from England. I notice by to-day's paper he has taken a house on Portland Square for the London season—all for the purpose, I presume, of marrying his girl's dowry to some penniless English officer. A man is a fool or a mercenary wretch who looks for money with a wife. He gets all he deserves and more too, if he gets her."

"I don't agree with you," said Portia, flushing. "I think it the most natural thing in the world for wealthy people to like one another—and marry. You know what the hoofs of the Yorkshire farmer's horse said when he was seeking a wife: 'Property! Property!'"

Bryan smiled.

"I should like to hear you recite the whole poem," he said, and then, leaning on the table and looking at her steadily, he went on:

"You did your level best, too, this morning. I felt proud for you."

"Were you really there, then?" she asked, surprised and pleased.

"Oh, yes, I was there, of course. But I was glad when it was over."

"Why?" asked the girl, ingenuously.

"I didn't fancy your trying to please such a promiscuous crowd, and then I knew how tired you were getting."

She looked down a minute. She was exquisitely glad that he cared about her lecture or her, even if the care had an unreasonable expression. The unreasonableness was the most delightful part of it.

"I didn't get too tired," she said, gently. "My chief fear was that I couldn't please my hearers. I felt terribly audacious. I am glad I am through."

"You would never want to repeat it, would you?" he asked, eagerly.

"If I did, what then?" she inquired, with a little laughing defiance. She had always fancied that in his heart he was ultra-conservative about women.

"It wouldn't be worth your while."

"It would, if I had talent; but not having talent, simply having the faculty of a drudge, I would be glad never to do it again."

"Then, don't."

"But I must."

"Portia!"

His voice was so eager, his blue eyes alight with such an ardent, steely glow, that she began to tremble.

"Portia!"

She raised her eyes with a great effort.

"Lecture to me instead—all the rest of your life."

"How weary you would soon be of me."

He shook his head. "I'd listen, if only to hear the melody of your voice."

"My voice!" Her face was full of naïve wonder. "If it were the rich contralto of Mrs. Candace."

"Mrs. Candace is all very well. I have the greatest respect for her—but, Portia, it is you I love."

She looked at him seriously and longingly, her whole soul in that searching gaze. She could not quite believe him, and yet she knew he did love her.

"I do love you, Portia, with my whole heart. Will you be my wife?"

They were sitting on either side of a table. Bryan had folded his arms, leaning them on the table as he continued.

He now took her little olive hand lying open near him.

"Will you, dear?"

"Do you care for me so much as that?"

Their eyes met.

Suddenly she put her other hand over his and laid her cheek on it.

The table growing a cruel barrier, Bryan soon drew out his hand and came around to where she remained with her face covered now. He sat down, and drawing her gently to him, whispered—

"Tell me, Portia; tell me you will be my wife? Say the very words, dear."

"Yes, I will. I will be your wife."

"My darling!"

There was the sound of voices just outside the door.

She hurried into her room, but returned presently.

Mrs. Candace and Dr. Brighteck had come in. Elizabeth hastened toward her with open arms.

"Dear heart, I am so glad."

"And I, too, Miss Max. You have won the very best fellow in the world."

"I had to tell them right away, Portia," said Bryan.

CONCLUSION.

A MONTH after the events narrated in the last chapter, the Lakewood season had waned.

There were occasional summer ardors in the April sunshine, warmed to intenser life by the yellow sands and the south winds blowing over the balsamic pines.

The young people went in search of early spring flowers. The boats began to dot the lake.

A few of the cottages were deserted; the hotels were no longer full; but in the mornings and late afternoons Madison Avenue was still gay with carriages.

Mrs. Grace was again able to drive out.

Mr. Carruthers had returned from Denver, and his wife had gone back rather suddenly to New York to attend her aged father.

Perth and Millicent, after renewing their vows and making all manner of plans to begin life for themselves in the autumn on the salary Mr. Adina's offer to the young man would furnish, parted, and Miss Beadle and her charge settled down into what seemed a monotonous existence

to the latter, and only slightly relieved by bi-diurnal letters from Perth.

The days did not drag to Miss Beadle. There was but one cloud on her horizon, and it was composed of fears incident to meeting Mr. and Mrs. Kent on their return.

Meanwhile there was a daily urgent request on Mr. Gordon's part for an immediate marriage.

But she thought it was only proper they should wait till autumn—"old people should be in all things deliberate."

"You don't want a big wedding, do you?" he asked, in some anxiety.

"Oh, mercy, no!" she cried, alarmed at the mere thought.

"You know we have been lovers for twenty years. We ought to know our own minds by this time."

"It is very true," she said, with a slight relenting in her voice.

"Then, to quote Whittier, 'What's to hinder?'"

At length, rather suddenly, and almost as if of her own accord, she decided that an immediate marriage was advisable. It had occurred to her, after a night of sleepless worry about the Kents, that if she were really Mrs. Gordon when they returned, she could, in an emergency, place her husband between their wrath and herself.

So, one beautiful spring morning, when the sky

was as propitious as their happiness, they boarded the train for New York, went directly to the chantry of Grace Church, and with Perth and Millicent for absorbed and delighted listeners and witnesses, were married in good form and with a sufficiently lengthy ceremony to enable them to realize when they came out on Broadway that they were *bona fide* man and wife.

A delicious little breakfast at Delmonico's followed, and afterward Mr. and Mrs. Gordon, with Miss Kent, returned to Lakewood. They went to the "Laurel-in-the-Pines" in order to afford their young friend a short stay at that hotel.

Meanwhile, Ethel was trying to put in force her new resolutions, and the chief concern she had was, that there was so much pleasure to be gained in sacrificing one's self.

"Why, Mrs. Candace, if it should continue to be like this, it will simply make me more selfish than ever."

"It will not always be an easy road," replied Elizabeth, smiling tenderly over her ignorance of the heights or depths of self-abnegation, "but these gentle beginnings will fit you for the more serious efforts of the future. It is certainly not your fault if you find the giving up of your house to Portia's wedding a real joy."

For Portia, too, was to be married, and Ethel had not only invited her to stay at Pine Burrs

till that event took place, but had insisted upon giving the wedding.

Elizabeth and Portia remained nominally at the hotel, but most of the time during the interval was spent at Ethel's.

Portia lived as if in a dream. Everything in her life had been changed with the suddenness of the bloom of a northern winter into summer. She was in a position where the attentions of a lover and the sweet and growing affection of two enthusiastic women were becoming the very breath of her existence.

And not only Elizabeth and Ethel, but Mrs. Darlington and Mrs. Adina were vying with each other in investing these preliminary days with constant sweet surprises that made her forget she had ever been lonely.

The public lecture which Bryan had so much deplored and over the gains from which Portia was innocently and thankfully delighted, enabled her to provide her own trousseau, which she insisted upon doing to the smallest detail.

Naomi, with the domestic foresight of a Jewess and German in one, decided to make her wedding present the outfit of a princess in bed and table-linen.

Elizabeth and Ethel racked their brains over what would be a fit expression of good-will and love from them.

"It is no use thinking of diamonds," said Ethel, disconsolately. "Mr. Mallory, I suppose, will be presenting her with stomachers and coronets both. As for other jewels, she is too dark to wear emeralds and too young too. She can't wear pearls, and rubies are already spoken for by Dr. Bright-eck."

"Suppose you give her china," suggested Elizabeth.

Ethel caught at the idea.

"I will," she said. "It is the very thing. I was green with envy over Mrs. Adina's opportunity, and now I have mine."

"I will give her a complete service in silver, and then, dear, whenever your dishes remind her of you, the plate will make her think of me."

"That will be lovely!" exclaimed Ethel, a faint flush creeping into her cheeks still as white as the daisies in a vase beside her.

With the modesty of a woman who has long had little, Portia feared her own power to meet the great change in her circumstances.

She pleaded so earnestly for a quiet and small wedding that Ethel yielded the point, although wanting Portia's to be the most notable affair of the season.

There had been much curiosity over what Bryan would give his bride. Diamond suns and stars, necklaces and ropes of pearls had each been

predicted. It was supposed she might possibly wear several of these modern evidences of a bridegroom's generosity on her wedding day.

When she was dressed in her simple gown of white silk muslin unadorned with ancestral or other lace, but as delicate a model of exquisite needlework as only a thin gown can be, and after Ethel had adjusted the veil and when Portia evidently considered her toilet completed, Elizabeth asked, as if by way of a gentle reminder :

"Don't you expect to wear some gift from Mr. Mallory, dear?"

She glanced up with an expression of loving pride and said :

"We understand each other in this respect, dear Mrs. Candace. I am to wear only my wedding-ring to-day."

Elizabeth kissed her.

"You will insist on being a regular Griselda," exclaimed Ethel, "but you will have chances enough to be decked with the wealth of Ormus and of Ind, if you choose."

On the gentlest of all the April mornings that had dawned over Lakewood, the marriage took place in Mrs. Grace's drawing-room.

The sunshine was allowed to come in unobstructed. The floor was mottled with its happy light.

The bride and groom stood in a recess massed with roses from floor to ceiling.

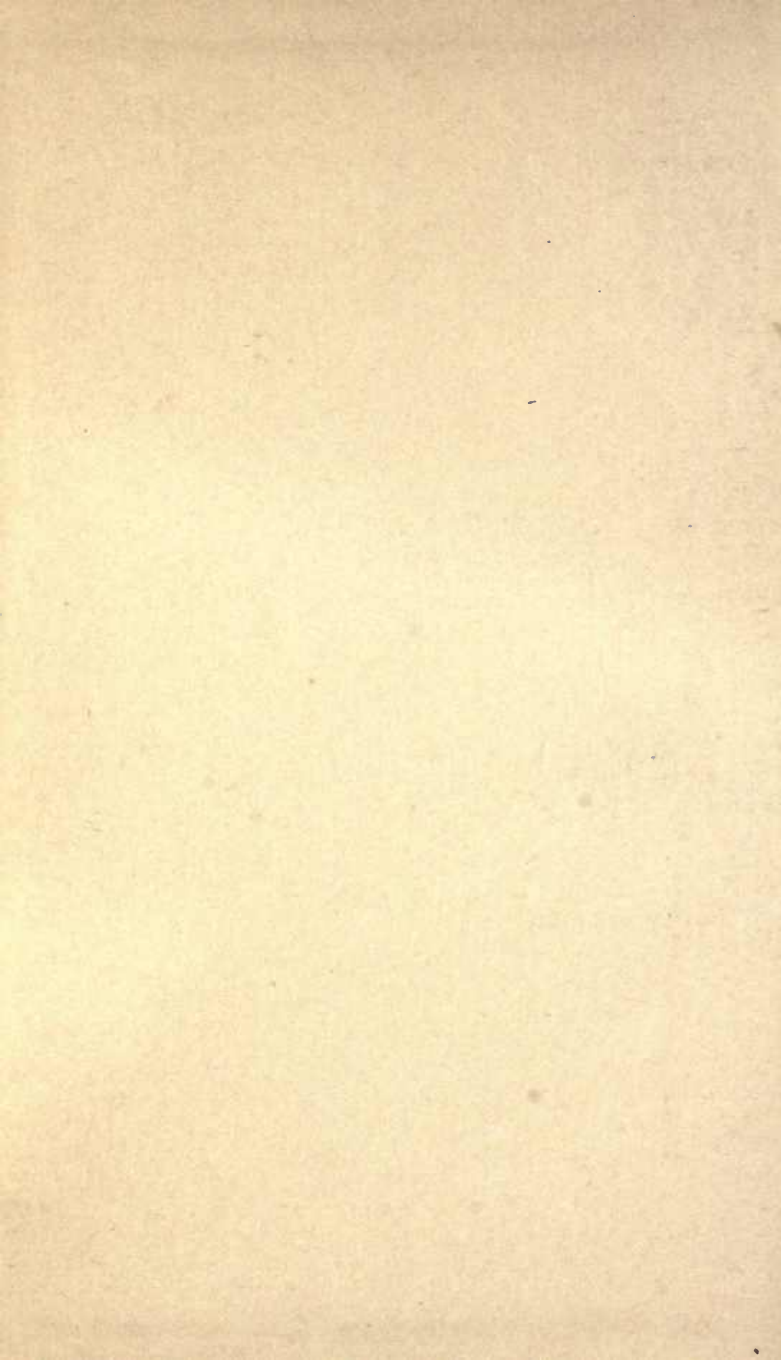
In a few moments, almost before any one was aware, the ceremony was over, and Portia was listening to the congratulations of her friends.

A month later the colonial mansion was closed, and Ethel and "Angora" were travelling by easy stages to the Engadine. Mr. and Mrs. Darlington had made an early exodus to the New England coast. Millicent had rejoined her parents, and Mr. and Mrs. Gordon were installed in a cliff cottage at Newport. Mr. and Mrs. Adina were settled in apartments in Frankfort for the remainder of the spring. The Lorrièves were stopping in New York, as Mrs. Lorriève was in quest of a house, having decided to migrate back from "Chister Square" to Gotham for the better development of a social career successfully begun at Lakewood. Dr. Brighteck was in Hamburg studying cholera germs, but expecting to take a brief mid-summer vacation in Switzerland. Mrs. Candace was in Washington making a round of visits, having promised to join the Mallorys during July in the Swiss Tyrol.

West End Series.

THE GRASSHOPPERS	. Mrs. Andrew Dean
A COMEDY IN SPASMS . . .	"Iota"
ANNE OF ARGYLE . . .	George Eyre-Todd
STOLEN SOULS . . .	William Le Queux
LAKEWOOD . . .	Mary Harriott Norris

Others in Preparation



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